Tunisia in the Post-Bourguiba Era

The Role of the Military in a Civil Arab Republic

by

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FOREWORD

The American military establishment spends a great deal of time and money in the study of our major adversaries. Much less interest is devoted to lesser powers, particularly those in the third world. However, it is evident that these lesser powers could be crucially important for a number of reasons, including strategic location, mineral wealth, and political instability.

Tunisia, the subject of this monograph, certainly should capture our interest because of its strategic location on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) southern flank. But, as Dr Ware points out in his introduction, there are many other reasons why the subject of this study should be important to American policymakers and military leaders.

Dr Ware's analysis is the product of scholarly research conducted in the United States as well as field research conducted in 1984. His conclusions and policy recommendations are well reasoned. Not all readers will agree with Dr Ware, but we can ill-afford to ignore the insights provided by such thorough research.

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PREFACE

This study argues that among military establishments the Tunisian armed forces is unique in being the only nonpraetorian institution of its kind in the Arab Middle East. Moreover, it is the only military force in the region to be denied an elite status in the political affairs of the nation it is dedicated to defend. For this reason, the Tunisian military may be described as the last army in the Middle East with an *élan* similar to that of the Third French Republic whose mission it is to protect the integrity of the Tunisian nation and to promote its national integration. But that special status is under strain as Tunisia enters a new and potentially dangerous phase in its modern history.

To understand the future role of the Tunisian armed forces in a changing society, we must examine the direction of those changes and try to gauge the reaction of the military, as a microcosm of Tunisian society, to the problems of national readjustment at a time when the old guard that brought Tunisia to independence is about to pass from the scene. Therefore, the first part of this study will be devoted to an examination of the question of succession to President Bourguiba, the appearance of Islamism, the role of the trade union movement, the threat of Libyan intervention, and the general condition of the Tunisian economy, all of which will have an important impact on future sociopolitical developments. The second part of the study will focus on the effect these problems have had on the armed forces in the context of military doctrine, recruitment, structure, socialization to national values, preparation to meet internal and external threats, and future political orientation. In this way, we can obtain a hypothetical view of the role the military may play in the post-Bourguiba era.

In concentrating on the Tunisian military, this study hopes to underscore the fact that the geostrategic and geopolitical importance of Tunisia has been imperfectly understood and that a reconsideration of Tunisia's place in US North African and Middle Eastern policy formulations should be undertaken as recent events now bear out. The study therefore concludes with an assessment of present American policy and makes suggestions for further initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary Middle East, Tunisia is a rare and unparalleled phenomenon. No other Arab regime can match its political longevity or its records of stable sociopolitical institutions and consistent foreign objectives. These successes have not gone unnoticed. Scholars regularly and minutely examine the Tunisian experience; diplomats praise the reasonableness of the Tunisian world view; businessmen have been encouraged to invest in Tunisian enterprises by an atmosphere favorable to capital and fiscal restraint. These apparent virtues ought to ensure the benevolent attention of the American public, but Tunisia remains almost entirely the province of those whose learned articles appear frequently in academic journals or in classified documents destined for the purview of people in high places. Such lack of notoriety occurs neither by design nor by inadvertence. Tunisia is today, as it has been in past decades, a comparatively peaceful place. It manifests none of those visible symptoms of endemic disorder that the media deign to consider newsworthy. In a word, Tunisia has simply been forgotten.

To take superficial calm at face value, however, and to adopt an attitude of calculated neglect towards this small and unobtrusive nation, is to run the risk of not treating seriously the hypothetical until it becomes the real. Forces are operating beneath the placid surface of the contemporary Tunisian political scene—forces that may cause inestimable damage to the fabric of national equilibrium.

This study, however, does not propose to focus on Tunisian affairs solely for the purpose of rescuing a country friendly to American interests from benign obscurity. Nor does it attempt simply for the sake of analysis to construct a balance sheet of probable crises which may ultimately provoke instability. Rather, this study seeks to establish the basis for a reconsideration of the importance of Tunisia in regional and international affairs and to point out that what is happening today in this North African nation is indicative of more diffuse and troubling tendencies in the Middle East.

Perhaps the greatest imponderable in the restoration of perspective to the Tunisian question will be the role of the Tunisian armed forces after President Bourguiba passes from the scene. The Tunisian military is a unique institution among Middle Eastern armies; it is also untried and untested as an agent of national reconciliation. It may soon emerge to play a commanding role in developing new

Tunisian national directions. Whether it can meet the challenge is a question that requires careful assessment.

The Tunisian military has never been the object of systematic study. Little or nothing is known of its doctrine, socialization, national and professional values, internal organization, relation to civil authority, or perception of threat. Any discussion of these issues must be speculative, but such speculations must be made if a clear notion of the choices available to the armed forces are to be understood and put into proper context.

This study attempts to analyze the disposition of the Tunisian armed forces to act during a period of prolonged crisis. The first section looks at the present situation in Tunisia with a view to a description of the social, economic, and political imbalances that may lead to insurrection. The second section analyzes the structure and solidarity of the military indexed against constant pressure for socioeconomic and political transformation. Finally, the study puts forward a certain number of scenarios as options for military intervention in Tunisian national affairs.

How Tunisia and its military deal with internal and external problems can be instructive for American policy in North Africa. This study therefore concludes with some general policy recommendations that reestablish Tunisia's geostrategic importance to the balance of power in the Arab Maghreb and its great value as an instrument for peaceful solutions of enduring regional problems. Reevaluation of Tuniso-American relations cannot help but reinform American policymakers at a time when protracted conflict in the Mediterranean is becoming more probable but less explicable.

PART 1

The Present Situation

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Giuseppe de Lampedusa, *The Leopard*

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CHAPTER 1

TUNISIA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN ENVIRONMENT

The Tunisian connection with the world beyond the confines of the Mediterranean Sea is no fanciful metaphor; it is both real and palpable. Tunisia occupies a position on the North African littoral at a point almost equidistant between the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. Here the Cap Bon Peninsula pushes a finger out into the sea to within ninety kilometers of the Sicilian coast and effectively divides the Mediterranean into western and eastern compartments. Moreover, a casual glance at the map of the country is sufficient to recall that the Atlas mountain chain, in its broad sweep from Morocco to Tunisia, reaches figuratively across the waters of the Sicilian Straits to form a geological continuum with the great mountain ranges of Southern Europe. Sitting astride the narrows between Africa and Europe, Tunisia commands the dominant strategic junction between the eastern and western ends of the inland sea. Possessing a coastline that is oriented in both directions, it has been an object of interest to both European and Arabo-Islamic empires.

History shows clearly the lengths to which the great empires of both ancient and modern worlds have gone in attempting to incorporate the populations of the Mediterranean Basin into one political unity. The first successful merger of the northern and southern banks occurred as a consequence of the Punic Wars when the cry *delenda est Carthago* (Carthage must be destroyed) rallied the Romans against Carthaginian commercial and military competition. After a series of protracted conflicts, the Mediterranean became a Roman lake and Tunisia became the breadbasket of the Roman Empire. The Arabs later strove to bring Sicily into the Muslim sphere of influence. In modern times, the French created a vast colonial enterprise that eventually assimilated much of sub-Saharan and West Africa under their control. Today, Colonel Mu'ammar Qadhdhafi seeks to extend a *pax libica et islamica* from the Atlantic shores of Morocco to the rocky inlets of Lebanon, south into Black Africa, and north through the Maltese Islands to Europe itself.

The Mediterranean Sea serves as the geographic link between these continents no less now than it did in antiquity. Nor is the Strait of Sicily reduced in its important

function as the valve that opens and closes maritime communication between Western Europe and the Middle East. In point of fact, that importance has taken on an enhanced significance. A world order dominated in the post-World War II era by the two great superpowers and a subsequent diffusion of power among alternative centers of regional influence has made the Mediterranean Basin once more the focus of international competition. At one end of the basin, Jews, Arabs, and Persians are locked into a perennial conflict that affects the right to determine the political direction of the Middle East and the disposition of its immense resources. At the other end, the NATO community, under the tenuous hegemony of the United States, protects these resources from Soviet seizure. The Mediterranean is one of the most politically, economically, and militarily interpenetrated regions of the globe. Even the mildest tremor calls into action forces willing, if not always able, to upset regional equilibrium. In past decades, the United States has been required to mount massive logistical operations in support of the Israeli military. In the future, the United States will certainly be required to furnish on short notice troops and materiel to the Persian Gulf. This demands a network of sea and air channels tying the Mediterranean Basin to sources of supply in America and Europe. Because military transfers to this zone of conflict depend upon stable environments at critical junctures along the precarious lifeline, small and inconspicuous nations like Tunisia play a role in disproportion to the actual influence they exercise in the international system.

Tunisia is not unaware of its geopolitical importance. Nor is it unaware that its particular place in the domain of international competition is precarious. Seen from the point of view of Tunisian external politics, stability means that no option for maneuver must be excluded. Hence, the Tunisian government avoids choices that may favor either Soviet or American initiatives. Specifically, Tunisia has put at the disposal of the Soviet navy the fine anchorages in the Gulf of Hammamet; and it permits limited use of its ports and air space by the United States. Tunisian authorities also try to maintain an internal defense against any ideology that would turn the country away from a nationalist and neutralist orientation. Freedom of action in situations that may restrict choice has been the historical imperative of the Tunisian ruling elite. It has obliged Tunisia, in both ideological and practical terms, to devise a strategy for survival.

The sociologists tell us that in the struggle to survive, each nation invents a myth of origin and a myth of mission. The Tunisian myth of origin has well-documented historical determinants in the flux and reflux of invasions from the outside. It has been argued by Tunisians themselves that the modern Tunisian personality rests firmly on the assimilation of the attributes of those races that have colonized the land and mixed with the indigenous population. Tunisians claim that they are not derivative of any one particular race; that is to say, that neither the Punico-Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine, nor Arab predominates, but that they are an amalgam of all. This leads to the popular conception of a basically homogenous Berber stock invigorated by the absorption and naturalization of alien values. Such

a self-conception is entirely consonant with the geographical facts of Tunisian existence which, in the absence of formidable physical barriers to conquest, have encouraged foreign penetration. Tunisians have projected their present back onto a past from which they claim to draw great sustenance and pride and have thereby created for themselves a set of complementary national characteristics. The virtue that occupies the highest place in the Tunisian national pantheon is clearly the cultural openness, that derives from the unique circumstances of Tunisian history. Openness sanctions free intercourse between modern Tunisia and the outside, permitting a selective borrowing of institutions and philosophies of governance most suited to the perpetuation of these underpinning self-conceptions. From the practical point of view, openness expresses itself in domestic policies marked by a reasonable degree of flexible pragmatism in the cause of national development. From the ideological point of view, openness allows for the rejection of all theories of state and replaces them with a universalized devotion to humanism, rationalism, and ameliorationism. The myth of origin has engendered a world view that bears the particular cachet of Habib Bourguiba who, in bringing Tunisia to independence, has crystallized the national experience into an all-encompassing and transcendent belief system that today bears his name.

Bourguibism is not only a view of Tunisia's place in the history of nations; it is also the monoparty politics of a unified state. Created by a man devoted to evolutionary, optimistic, progressive, and somewhat authoritarian liberalism, Bourguibism has also given rise to a myth of mission. For it is Tunisia's goal to demonstrate to the world the middle ground between state monopoly of all political functions and the regressive influence of traditional beliefs. With the decline of Lebanon as a Middle Eastern window unto the Western world, Tunisia today proposes herself as a bridge between the Orient and the Occident—a kind of new Switzerland of the Middle East. To that end, Bourguiba has invited the Arab League to sit in Tunis and the Palestinian Liberation Organization to take up legal residence in Tunisia. The myth of mission, then, is to both moderate regional problems and balance conflicting perspectives in the context of a superior political morality which only Tunisia possesses.

But the persuasive power of such noble ideals cannot rest on demographic weight or on the abundance of natural wealth. It must rest instead on example at a time when once again the Middle East has entered an extremely volatile period. Herein lies the keystone for what myths of survival are supposed to accomplish: the building of an elemental security system for Tunisia, founded not on material riches but on the efficacy of human resources.

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CHAPTER 2

BOURGUIBISM AND THE MODERN STATE

Implicit in the Tunisian myths of origin and mission is the belief that Tunisia can offer a practical alternative to regional conflict. This alternative is underpinned by Bourguiba's "faith in human dignity, the perfectibility of man, confidence in human solidarity, and [credence] in the supreme power of reason."[1] The resulting social harmony guarantees the security of the state and its citizens. A healthy polity socialized to and participating in the implementation of these ideals obviates the need for a strong military except as a means to protect the state against a compromise of its sovereignty and to maintain a constant vigilance against internal corruption. Political consensus is a major goal of Tunisian guided democracy. To this end, Bourgiba created the Neo-Destour* party which, by securing the independence of Tunisia from France in 1957 through a peaceful process of negotiation, legitimized its claim to lead the populace into the subsequent phase of nation-building. From the very beginning, the nation was identified with the person of its first and only president. Similarly, in the Neo-Destour party resided theoretically all the organisms of a burgeoning state. What remained as the primary task of postindependent solidarity was to create the institutions necessary to formally link the realities of party and state. Acting as head and creator of a party designed to bring to fruition his view of the world and the place of Tunisia in it, Bourguiba became the incarnation of the state. By unifying the party and the state, and in guaranteeing the internal cohesion of the Tunisian elite structure, Bourguiba aggregated to himself all political interests and demands.[2]

The alignment of party and state under Bourguiba's leadership was a prelude to political and economic modernization, which was necessary for Tunisian national security. Within a decade of independence, Bourguiba had begun a process that turned the country away from classical economic liberalism and toward a form of state intervention. Bourguiba named the process Destourian Socialism. The

*Arabic: "Destour" = Constitution

monoparty then changed its name to the Destourian Socialist Party (PSD), an indication that it was prepared to become the motor of this transformation.

Since that time, national life has been oriented toward socialism by a number of five-year economic plans. Less than successful, the socialist experiment has required the dismantling of the Destourian socialist superstructure, the decentralization of the political control of the party over the developmental process, the return of capitalistic entrepreneuralism, and the inevitable rebureaucratization of the state's administrative organisms.[3]

As the political sociologist Clement Henry points out so eloquently:

> Modernization . . . clashes with the liberal notion that political activity rests on a pre-existing social harmony. Modernization is not viewed instrumentally but requires growth of new institutions as a central problem. Institutionalization is a process whereby structural legitimacy replaces ideology or personal prestige; the organization not the individual is infused with value. Institutionalization requires contending interest groups within a single party which are permitted autonomy in the influence of policy. This limits constitutionally the power of individuals.[4]

The problem has been that the Tunisian process of modernization, which equates development to security, may not have created institutions strong enough to survive the death of the president; and Bourguiba is now in his ninth decade of life and in precarious health. The orderly transfer of power to a new leadership and the reconciliation of internal Tunisian change to this reality has become the one issue on which the enduring stability of Tunisia may indeed be decided.[5]

Although Tunisia appears to enjoy an unprecedented calm on the surface, a crisis of succession to Bourguiba has in fact been evolving for the past two decades. This crisis has taken the form of a contest to determine whether power will be passed to a successor by electoral means, which implies an open experiment in political pluralism, or by a narrowly based, yet fairly representative, party.

Initially, Article 12 of the Tunisian constitution provided for an order of succession from prime minister—an office which has been alternately suppressed and reconstituted—to the president of the National Assembly to the minister of justice.[6] Since the president appoints all his ministers, he essentially designates his successor. Article 22 states that the Central Committee of the party names the president of the party and, since the president of the republic is also president of the party, it is not difficult to see how party and constitution interests coincide.[7] Selection of a new president for the PSD requires the Central Committee to seek ratification by the National Assembly even though Bourguiba proposed in 1964 that the Central Committee be convened in 24 hours to elect a party president, precluding ratification by the National Assembly.[8]

The role of the party in the succession question demonstrated the force of two often contradictory imperatives: limit the size of the decision-making apparatus and yet encourage the involvement of younger technocratically able party members so as to mobilize their resources for the transition to a planned economy.[9]

Subsequent constitutional developments rendered more complex the process of choosing a successor to Bourguiba. Article 51 states that members of the

government will appoint one of their number temporarily to fill the office of president.[10] In 1966, Bourguiba appointed a Council of the Republic consisting of selected cabinet officers and members of the party's Political Bureau, to assist the president in his duties. It was also given power to carry out the execution of Article 51, a prerogative previously reserved to members of the government.[11] As cabinet officers are often members of the Political Bureau, this change narrowed the decision on succession to an even smaller number of party functionaries. Once the Central Committee performs its mandate as outlined in Article 22, the interim president designated by the Council of the Republic becomes head of the party and head of state. Hence, the party itself has juridical power and a constant struggle for political ascendancy is guaranteed. At the same time, the role of the general electorate in the choice of chief executive is denied. When Bourguiba stated that "experience has shown that the concentration of power in the hands of one person, however devoted he may be, involves risks" [and that it is necessary to lighten the responsibilities assumed up to now by the president and by him alone],[12] he was recognizing the need for an expansion of responsibility. He was also implying that as new competitive interests emerged, they would have to be balanced one against the other in order to buttress the presidential monarchy. Thus the circle of power brokers underwent sporadic cycles of contraction and expansion.

The one event that underlined the inadequacy of the constitutional provisions for succession was the collapse in 1969 of the guided experiment in socialism. There followed a decentralization of the economy and a restructuring of the party's role in the modernization process. Associated with this abrupt shift in policy was the former minister of economy, Ahmed Ben Salah. Ben Salah rose from the ranks of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) to become Bourguiba's economic czar in 1961. He had used the union as a base to impose his economic philosophy on party politics. Ben Salah sought to link the party to the grass roots through a system of cooperatives that, after being launched in 1964 with the second five-year plan, heralded the centralization of all national economic functions in the hands of Ben Salah's superministry. And with the concentration of economic power in one organism of government came regional Committees of Coordination to more closely tie the cooperative movement to party direction.

As the cooperative system received priority over other methods of stimulating socioeconomic progress, the development effort became overcentralized. Moreover, financial accounting became too complex to be handled by the small and incompetent corps of managers then available. But most important, the accumulation of both political and economic power in Ben Salah's ministry enhanced his chance to be Bourguiba's successor. Since politics and social change cannot be separated, it was inevitable that the party provide the institutional framework for social transformation. The problem was that the cooperative system was in a position to compete with the party itself as the organ for the aggregation of national interests.[13] Ben Salah had to be relieved of his post because it was evident to all that the development process could be turned into a powerful claim on

national leadership.[14] He was imprisoned, but escaped to exile in France where he founded a political party in opposition to Bourguiba.

Bourguiba had to protect his power from institutional limitations, but he was obliged to keep the avenues of political mobility open. This had made possible the meteoric rise to power of Ben Salah. Yet, paradoxically, the stability that is necessary for rapid change cannot be achieved without institutions that tend to freeze competing power interests and circumscribe development.[15] Thus, Bourguiba must rule by manipulation and not by force. He must anticipate interests but must not allow them to coalesce. He had to refuse to be limited by the institutions he had allowed Ben Salah to create, but he was at the same time obliged to build maximum consensus behind Ben Salah's policies.[16] When Ben Salah was finally cashiered, the developmental process was decentralized; and this had a profound influence on the struggle to find an eventual replacement for the leader. In order to freeze competition, Bourguiba was obliged to agree to an institutionalization of the succession process and to the accountability that it implied. This was the dilemma faced by Tunisia in the decades of the seventies, for neither the president nor anyone else was content to permit another powerful person like Ben Salah to rise so rapidly to the top.

After the fall of Ben Salah, the succession question once more focused on the constitution. In November 1969, Bourguiba revived the post of prime minister; in December, he requested that the National Assembly amend Article 51 of the constitution so that in the case of his death the prime minister would serve out the presidential term. A group of liberals lobbied to make the prime minister accountable to the National Assembly rather than to the president, and to provide for the election of a successor. A presidential commission decided that in the event of the prime minister's death, the president of the National Assembly would assume his duties and an election for the presidency would be held within a month. The acting president could not be a candidate. The struggle now commenced between Bourguiba and the liberal reformers (led by one of Bourguiba's ministers, Ahmed Mestiri) for establishing the procedures of succession. The president concentrated on his choice for prime minister; the liberals, afraid that a technocrat of Ben Salah's kind would rise again, concentrated on securing power for the National Assembly.

The issue resurfaced at the PSD congress in the autumn of 1971. Not only did the congress demand that top party and government office holders be elected rather than appointed, it also urged adoption of a measure to ensure that Bourguiba's successor would be elected by universal suffrage one month after the president's death and that the president of the National Assembly should serve as interim president of the republic. The congress also demanded that the Political Bureau of the party be elected from the party's Central Committee; Bourguiba held out for his prerogative of personal appointment. Compromise was sought. Bourguiba yielded on the issue of appointing his own Political Bureau but insisted that no more than half of its members be elected.

In early 1972, the succession issue was the cause of disturbances at the national university and a compromise again had to be arranged. The post of elected vice

president of the republic was created, but how his candidacy was to be decided was left moot. So was the question of the vice president's role in the succession process. In the end, the new post was suppressed.

Bourguiba insisted on maintaining continuity through his prime minister. It was finally decided that the prime minister should assume the presidency subject to a referendum within 40 days which might either confirm him as president or relieve him of his temporary post. The president could name a *dauphin* who would have an advantage in the succession process since whoever serves as prime minister at the time of the president's death is almost certain to become president. The accountability of both president and prime minister to the National Assembly was upheld in theory, but the notion that the presidency should be the object of multiparty competition by direct suffrage was defeated.[17]

When the process of organizing the economy into consumer and producer cooperatives came to an end in 1969, a period of political and economic decentralization followed. The president was obliged to relieve himself of some of his prerogatives, but he yielded no control in the direction of state affairs. He parliamentarized the Tunisian political system without divesting it of its monarchical character by reconstituting the division of political powers and instituting a new system of controls. The unity of political command was preserved, and the dialogue between social partners was confined to the omnipresent party and the president.[18] The party provided the ideology of the state, was parallel to the structures of the state, and furnished cadres to the state by controlling electoral lists or by nominating members to nonelective posts.[19]

The president retained huge discretionary powers. He could still propose legislation and make laws in the absence of the legislative body. Most important, he retained direct control over his cabinet. After 1974, he had himself reelected for life. And so, by 1976, Bourguiba had rethought his style of political management and reshaped the constitution to reflect new procedures.

First, Bourguiba divested himself of some prerogatives so as to command without being responsible. He did this by forming governments that participated in direct political action under his handpicked prime minister. He provided communication with the National Assembly through a special minister in charge of legislative affairs. Bourguiba allowed his prime minister to countersign decrees but not to counterbalance his authority. The prime minister was consulted in exceptional circumstances, such as the dissolution of the National Assembly, but only to approve a previously made presidential decision. Under Article 53 of the constitution, the prime minister received the delegated power of the president; but according to Article 60, these powers were indexed against the provisionary impediment of the president's ability to conduct affairs of state, and the nature of that impediment was a matter for the president's discretion alone.[20] Second, Bourguiba encircled the National Assembly. The Constitutional Law of 1976 permitted the National Assembly to censure the government, which was tantamount to a censure of the president's policies. The motion for censure, however, served only as a verification of the government's integrity. Censure required an absolute

majority, and no motion could be introduced without the Assembly's first giving the government three months warning. Since the Assembly had to make its complaint precise, the motion could be initiated after the three month period with less than a third of the Assembly voting for it. Then it would require two-thirds of the members for passage. At any time in the process, the president could dissolve the Assembly and call for new elections. Although procedures appeared to be democratized, the president's power as both judge and jury of the political process was not in the least diminished.[21]

The people possessed little or no juridical rights in determining the future leadership of the country except through a monoparty system that claimed to act as a representative of the general political will. The party is the basic expression of the state that both transmits and transmutes the authority of the citizenry.[22] Pluralism has yet to take root in Tunisia. The discrepancy between the concept of electoral freedom implied in pluralism and the actuality of the party's interests finds its parallel in a distortion of the notion that a constitution is an instrument of sovereign separation of power and should have a strong juridical hold on its own organizational content. But in the Tunisian case, since it cannot put an effective brake on the activities of the state, the constitution does not serve to enhance the stature of individual rights and liberties.[23] The constitution guarantees nothing because it is susceptible to individual manipulation. In Tunisia, where the direction of socioeconomic development presupposes a diffusion of authority and a concept of implicit autonomy. The concentration of power appears more and more to be an abuse of law whose sole purpose is to create a hierarchical vision of political responsibility. Insofar as power is concentrated in a single party that represents the will of one man who distributes the competence that ensures the domination of that party over politics, then, as Michel Camau demonstrates

> the more the administrative direction of the bureaucracy develops, the less it is in a position to respect the principles which are supposedly its basic norms. Similarly, the more the state imposes itself on the society, the less it accepts the emergence of what could become its private course; that is, the instrument of its separation and its emancipation.[24]

Thus, the constitution does not mediate conflict; it stands as another instrument of the state's dealing with the society, and this reinforces the growing presidential prerogatives. This situation may seem arbitrary and contradictory with respect to the kind of state-society relationship a constitution is meant to uphold. Yet, seen against the background of the perceived need to integrate, consolidate, and channel political interests to promote the modernization of social and economic structures and the eradication of social cleavages, the manipulation of constitutional law has a compelling logic, even if that logic goes against the grain of its assumptions.

Tunisian guided democracy permits the formulation of dissent in the same way it permits authority to be exercised—through diffuse and informal means. Specialized structures and procedures through which opposing interests may gain institutional validity and autonomy are suppressed. Although the situation of the country after

1969 demanded a new formula for interest aggregation outside the one-party system and the state, no such formula was produced. Constitutional reformism failed to ensure open competition for future national leadership. The contest continued in other domains.

CHAPTER 3

PLURALISM AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The tremendous expansion of the Tunisian socioeconomic infrastructure in the 1960s and the subsequent effort to contain its political ramifications affected to a large degree the direction of competition for high office. What has been overlooked, perhaps, is the rapid opening of new avenues for political participation to citizens hitherto marginally politicized. The unprecedented effort to mobilize opinion and form a national consensus for progress through the centralization of national economic structures represented the work of a powerful minister. The destruction of Ben Salah's claim to presidential succession necessitated a return to a liberal decentralized economy and a dismantling of the apparatus by means of which such claims could be validated. In the process of making these changes, the PSD has shown itself incapable of managing consensus. In the 1970s, the party seemed to be nothing more than a base for the Florentine intrigues of high functionaries; and its diminished status set into motion a generation of Tunisians who sought an outlet for political expression.

Among Arab populations of the Middle East, the Tunisian people are best prepared to exercise the pluralistic option.[25] In the Tunisian opposition, both associational and nonassociational, one finds a high degree of political sophistication. Bourguiba has dealt with problems of Tunisian political sovereignty in a way that reflects his commitment to liberal ideals. His rational style recognizes the importance of persuasion, compromise, negotiation, reconciliation, and consensus-building. Tunisian independence triumphed with the support of a mass party socialized to nationalistic values and without the revolutionary violence that marked the campaigns for freedom from French colonial domination in neighboring states. By the time of independence, an avowedly secular political creed was implanted firmly in the consciousness of the elites. Loyalty to the state replaced more parochially defined identifications. But this creed could not risk a stridently ideological formulation lest the nascent state involve itself in deleterious regional entanglements.

Bourguiba has preached the value of Tunisia's Arabo-Islamic legacy, but has been scrupulously careful to avoid taking sides formally on issues (such as the

Arab-Israeli conflict, the Lebanese Civil War, and the Iran-Iraq stalemate) that could compromise the nationalistic nature of Tunisia's Arab and Muslim values. Opposition to state policies has been tolerated if it confined itself to the enunciation of differing principles at a high level of abstraction rather than demanding implementation of programmatic alternatives. The party structure has always acted as the channel for such dissent, thus ensuring that political opposition will not challenge the sanctity of the state and creating a universal political parlance whereby conflicts may be resolved. Even Bourguiba's opponents speak his political language, rendering more plausible the possibility of a loyal opposition.

Until recently, no alternative party had been permitted to organize, but Bourguiba yielded to a demand for free elections during the 1981 national electoral campaign. Opponents scurried to erect a party framework around their programs and to prepare for open competition, but all opposition parties except the Tunisian Communist Party, outlawed since 1963, were successfully disenfranchised. Once again, the PSD monopolized the political process.

The one national organization that might have contested the 1981 elections was the General Union of Tunisian Workers. Strongest and most autonomous of all the trade unions in Africa, the UGTT has had a long and honorable history as the partner of the PSD. The Tunisian trade union movement grew out of the activities of the French General Confederation of Workers in the aftermath of World War I. It was first organized as a dependency of French syndicalism and then as an organization representing Tunisian working class interests.[26] When his party was suppressed by the French authorities, Bourguiba looked to the Tunisian trade unionists to carry on the nationalist cause. Thus, a cooperation based on an understanding of mutual needs formed the postindependence strategy that attacked the contradictions between nationalism and French imperialism, postponing the working out of other contradictions such as those that existed between national functionaries and the proletariat. This cooperation laid the groundwork for a minimum of congruence between the working class and other nationalist forces, predisposing the unionists to collaborate openly with the party.[27] And since labor unions in predominantly agricultural countries cannot form themselves into labor parties, the UGTT was inclined to ally itself with a political elite with which it shared similar views, especially on such questions as modernization.[28]

The problem for Tunisian syndicalism was and is how to remain free of coercion by an omnipotent party in a period of immense change. Logic calls for consolidation of effort without either compromising the right of the union to an autonomous existence or interrupting the pace of economic development. The union has sought to avoid repression by the state while continuing its consumptionist drive for wage increases. The government views this drive as a negative factor affecting the rate of capital reinvestement in development.[29] The UGTT has changed from a protest movement to a partner in modernization. And it has possessed a progressive leadership, a philosophical congruity with governing elites, an open and institutionalized structure for the appraisal of its values, and a commitment to the principle of accountability of its rank and file.[30]

The UGTT has voiced its political differences with the party, but no cleavages have threatened the unity of national purpose. In the immediate postindependence period, the relationship reflected the strain of conciliating Ben Salah's tendency to impose an economic strategy on the state and Ahmed Tlili's (secretary-general of the UGTT following Ben Salah) tendency to impose collective leadership on Bourguiba.[31]

In an attempt to reverse its subordinate position and differentiate itself functionally from the party in the early 1960s, the union under Habib Achour claimed to serve as a counterweight to party cohesion while stressing its role as an integrative class welfare institution.[32] This was a clear signal to Bourguiba that the UGTT might pave the way one day for open political competition. Therefore, the trade union movement had to be controlled. Bourguiba recognized that only the UGTT possessed the institutional framework for the articulation of dissent to the party's monocracy, and that only the union could raise substantive questions concerning Bourguiba's adoption of Ben Salah's economic concepts. Not least important, Bourguiba knew that he must refuse to admit that competing class interests counterbalanced the forces of collective consciousness necessary for the development effort.[33] And after 1965, the UGTT was brought to heel.

With the collapse of the cooperative program during the Second Plan period and the rapid dissolution of cooperative structures in the Third Plan period (1969–1972), the delicately calibrated equilibrium between party and union began to break down. The Fourth Plan period, inaugurated in 1973, reoriented the country once again towards the economic liberalism that had marked the earlier history of the republic. The government was reacting to some hard demographic facts. The population of Tunisia was growing at a rate of 2.5 percent per annum and was now approaching the six million mark. Almost half the population was under the age of 20, and they required places in the work force.[34] Destruction of the cooperative system had uprooted many agricultural workers and impelled them towards the cities, whose problems had already reached the critical stage. An investment code adopted in 1974 aimed at absorbing the growing nonagricultural labor force into labor-intensive enterprises, which were created with government aid. These measures were designed to reduce the large number of seasonal workers who had begun in the early 1970s to migrate to Western Europe and the Libyan oil fields in search of employment.

Concessions designed to attract European capital to Tunisia were, unfortunately, counterproductive. Favored for capitalization were textile industries that employed almost exclusively women. Women received less pay than their male counterparts; and males were not trained, as the investment code specified, for managerial positions necessary for the future "Tunisification" of these industries. Raw material for industrial consumption was imported duty-free from the outside, finished products were not competitive for export, and industry was allowed a generous grace period of freedom from tax liability. The investment code, which had been proposed as an antidote for unemployment (at the expense of capital

production), did not encourage sufficient industry to come to Tunisia. Furthermore, it came to be widely believed that the government had been abetting the neocolonization of Tunisia by European businesses. The rate of unemployment had increased significantly by the end of 1977.

The Fifth Plan began in 1977, and it required for success an understanding between the government and the union that labor peace was essential to a favorable investment climate. During the previous year, textile, metal, utilities, post office, transportation, health, and other public sector workers had staged wildcat strikes throughout the country. The issues revolved around the failure of salaries to keep up with the cost of living, which rose by 9.3 percent in 1977.[35] Union militants applied considerable pressure to force the government to increase the minimum agricultural (SMAG) and industrial (SMIG) wage. The head of the UGTT, Habib Achour, was caught in a dilemma; he condemned the strike actions, but had no control over union unrest.

The government proposed a truce in the form of a "social pact" between the union, employer representatives, and the party for the remainder of the 1977–1981 period. This proposal included a moratorium on strikes as a stimulus to increased production, in return for which the UGTT would receive a government pledge to improve working conditions, stabilize staple commodity prices, and increase worker purchasing power through annual wage increments in the industrial and service sectors every January and in the agricultural sector every April, subject to annual negotiations. All wage raises were supposed to take into consideration increases in the cost of living and in productivity.[36] But productivity was actually falling, and the wage raises could barely keep up with inflation despite an initial 33-percent increase in the minimum per-hour wage.

Union militants condemned the pace, however, and 40 strikes occurred in the first half of 1977. In December 1977, six ministers favorable to a reconciliation with the union resigned from the government and were replaced by hardliners. Because of the continuing unrest in the factories, the defense minister was transferred to the post of minister of interior; and for the first time, an army colonel became chief of the National Police.

The union was badly split between radicals who declared that the pact was a "violation of the most elementary principles of trade union democracy"[37] and those who counseled cooperation with the government. The government began to jail strikers, and the union gave the government until January 1978 to release those imprisoned and renegotiate its demands. The government's liberal cabinet ministers resigned, revealing its polarization. The union's national council met on 8 January and adopted a resolution charging that the country was "oriented towards the consolidation by all possible means of a capitalist class which was contrary to the national interest, especially because this class linked its interests to exploitative foreign capital."[38] UGTT secretary-general Achour resigned from the Political Bureau of the party on the same day, severing a 40-year connection between party and union.

On 22 January the UGTT called for a general strike to protest attacks on union officials throughout the country, incarceration of union members, and the government's failure to satisfy demands for equitable wages. The government believed that the union had been infiltrated by antistate elements, and that it was attempting to encourage open revolution. When the strike occurred on 26 January, it was met with harsh repression. The government blamed the Communists, the Baathists, and Libyan sympathizers for the strike. All but two members of the union's executive staff were arrested. The government convened a special UGTT congress in February, during which its own handpicked men were elected to the vacant executive posts. By March, the government had declared its intention to create a special labor force, the *Service Civil*, which would induct all unemployed males between the ages of 18 and 30. The disturbances of 26 January 1978—"Black Thursday" as it is known—opened a new chapter in the modern political history of Tunisia.

CHAPTER 4

THE DILEMMA OF THE TUNISIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

The assumptions and practices of Tunisian economic development have had a far from negligible impact on the changing direction of national leadership. That the leadership should today appear less than stable is regrettable, but such events are often the consequences of efforts to restructure postindependence societies in the shortest possible time.

Tunisia has unfortunately not been blessed with an abundance of marketable resources, nor has it a highly elaborated infrastructure to exploit its finite quantities of iron and phosphate ore. Tourism and petroleum have shown some potential, but the former depends largely on external economic circumstances over which the Tunisians have little control and the latter has never been present in large enough quantities for profitable export over a long period of time. Moreover, Tunisian economic health has been founded on diverse enterprises that require sound fiscal management, a stable currency, and national economic institutions that funnel limited private and public investments into capital-producing industries. The UGTT was from the very beginning a willing partner in this, and it has accepted government control over wages.

During the first five years of independence, investment did not materialize from abroad; nor was it generated through liberal economic policies from within. In fact, investment fell with the flight of the French between 1956 and 1962 and there appeared no way to attract capital back without the risk of neocolonization.

To remedy the problem, the Tunisian government maximized national agricultural potential for the creation of investment capital. Cooperatives were designed to reduce foreign aid to 50 percent of investment. They were also expected to raise the savings rate of the GNP to 26 percent after 10 years, for which a growth rate of 6 percent per annum was necessary.[39] This would ensure an autonomous framework for development. When the cooperative movement failed in 1969, the country was hard hit. Despite the unprecedented growth of capital accumulation, agricultural and industrial enterprises did not reach the level of production designated in the Second Plan. Nor did phenomenal growth of the oil and tourist

industries obscure the fact that the rate of national economic growth hovered at two percentage points below the projected figure.[40] Overambitious planning put tremendous pressure on the forced savings, squeezing local consumption to the point that dependence on foreign aid could not be broken. This was reflected in a foreign debt-service ratio that increased from 23 percent in 1967 to 29 percent in 1970.[41]

Thus, Tunisia was not able to reduce its vulnerability. The government attempted to control dependency on outside sources of finance by devaluing its currency. And to maintain good credit with international financial institutions, it promised not to extend cooperativization beyond the most fertile agricultural regions. Yet the drive for cooperativization continued until the hypothetical implications of impulsive planning became the reality of national disaster.

Not all the causes of this disaster were economic, however; it had a political dimension. Striving to justify their political raison d'être by accomplishing what the former liberals could not achieve in the previous decade, the new technocrats under Ben Salah were driven to an uncompromising view of centralized planning as the antidote to the nation's ills.[42] If the avowed object of centralized planning meant not only economic transformation at a breakneck pace through the creation of nonindustrial jobs and a full-employment policy but also the political mobilization of the peasant farmer through the cooperatives, then a reversal of this policy would certainly bring the kind of strategic damage that comes when the aspirations of the masses are raised but not met.

When the Tunisian government was forced to abandon its projects for complete cooperativization of the country's economic life, it opted to reinstitute a policy of private and public sector coexistence and adopted a new economic policy that encouraged profitable forms of business.[43] The results were in the short term impressive—in 1971, the growth rate reached 7 percent—but the structural problems were not addressed. The path was paved for the labor unrest of the late 1970s and for the country's present malaise.

Throughout the 1970s, the Tunisian economy appeared deceptively healthy. The gross domestic product grew, but the underlying problems of declining agricultural production, increasing unemployment, and payments deficits remained. Most indicative of ill health was the country's growing reliance on its few major exports: phosphates, textiles, and petroleum. These accounted at the beginning of the 1980s for 75 percent of Tunisia's total exports, of which 54 percent consisted of crude oil.[44] Tunisia's share of the phosphate market remained small compared to Morocco, the United States, and the Soviet Union; and her textile industry, which had been the target of the Investment Code of 1974, began to meet rough times because of restrictive international trade barriers. Tourism had always been a source of revenue, but could not be relied upon to furnish the bulk of Tunisia's hard currency earnings because it was tied to external conditions.

During the 1970s and early 1980s petroleum dominated the Tunisian economic scene. High quality crude was exported while lower quality oil was imported for

domestic consumption. As long as the balance of trade favored export, the situation was beneficial. Between 1977 and 1981, exports grew in value faster than imports at an average rate of 14 percent per annum as against 8.9 percent in the previous plan period, keeping the balance of payments deficit at a tolerable level.[45] The pattern is expected to reverse itself by 1986, however. Even with new discoveries, the oil sector growth is declining; and the oil price slump cannot help but affect Tunisia adversely.

The oil question also has an important political dimension. Since the discovery of oil in 1974 in the Gulf of Gabès, in a zone whose sovereignty was disputed with Libya, Tunis's relations with Tripoli have been extremely strained. In the same year, the Tunisian government had signed an agreement to merge the two countries but decided shortly thereafter to renege. This action may have led to Colonel Qadhdhafi's subsequent intransigence concerning Tunisia's right to exploit the oil. In 1979, after several years of fruitless negotiations, Libya and Tunisia agreed to submit their dispute to the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

That Tunisia is anxious to conciliate Libya has been evident all along. In fact, while it was plain that Libya had had a hand in an attempt to topple the Tunisian government in 1980, Tunisia maintained an open diplomatic posture towards Libya and did not force the sovereignty issue. Practically speaking, such a posture was based on sound logic. Libya's relatively undeveloped but booming economy has, since Qadhdhafi's revolution, served to siphon off Tunisia's excess laborers. But Libya is more than a safety valve. It is also an important source of hard currency, remittance from Tunisian workers equaling, with monies coming from laborers in Europe, approximately $300 million per annum.[46] Libya has the potential to fund Tunisian development and therefore must be propitiated. Both the government and the UGTT are cognizant of this important fact. In 1982, an International Court of Justice ruling proposed an international maritime boundary that kept a number of oil fields within Tunisian territory. Successful exploitation may very well reverse the trend toward Tunisian oil dependency in the Sixth Plan period. And while there is no guarantee that the two countries will implement this ruling in the form of a treaty, Libya has shown its good will by withdrawing its objection to Tunisian membership in the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The smoothing over of differences with Libya facilitated an atmosphere of political calm necessary for the proper functioning of the Sixth Plan. The tourist, textile, and phosphate industries received a good deal of attention from the planners, but the creation of jobs to justify a one-third increase in the national minimum wage remained the primary concern of the government. To help in the creation of more employment opportunities, the government offered a wage-subsidy program for small businesses. And the traditional investment area of education continued to claim its share of the national budget.[47]

The greatest problem was how to pay for these programs, and for the modernization of the military which was undertaken after 1980, while at the same time maintaining subsidies on essential foodstuffs. The answer was expected to

come in the form of expanded foreign investments. To this effect, the Tunisian decision makers attempted to tap the mother lode of the oil-rich Arabs. Three new joint venture banks were set up with Arab partners, and loans were arranged on soft terms. By 1980, there were 25,000 jobs available but 40,000 additional ones were needed to accommodate 65,000 school graduates.[48] If Libya and the Persian Gulf states could absorb this number, the job problem could be solved.

The need now is for strict and careful accounting during the Sixth Plan period and maximum flexibility in developing the private sector, even if this tends to impinge upon some of the sacred values of Destourian socialist dogma. Austerity is called for. National savings must be increased through decreased consumption. Borrowing will continue, and it cannot help but be expensive. International interest rates have skyrocketed, and funds have become more and more difficult to obtain.[49]

The belt tightening has come at a moment when the population at large has been mobilized in its economic and political expectations. The country has been moving towards political pluralism and a growing tolerance of the free market economy. Whether this relative freedom will satisfy the Tunisian people remains to be seen. Several factors must be considered if an answer is to be reached. First, workers who have lived abroad will play a large part in the future stability of the country—and it is these workers who have undergone psychological and social changes in alien environments, changes that the UGTT may not be able to channel usefully. Second, a distinct class system is beginning to emerge in Tunisia. This has been denied by the government, and has not been addressed properly by the mainstream labor leadership. And third, income distribution throughout the country has been disproportionate between the urban coastal areas and the rural hinterland. This is most readily apparent in the fact that the floating proletariat of the cities, which furnishes most of the migrants abroad comes from the countryside.[50]

Many Tunisians no longer consider the UGTT or the PSD capable of representing their interests, and have turned to other nonassociational forms of protest to express their needs.

CHAPTER 5

ISLAM AS A PROTEST MOVEMENT

Apart from the Labor Union movement, no political grouping possesses enough power to challenge the political hegemony of the PSD. The specialized interest groups that have given voice to various aspects of national life, such as the UGET (Union Générale des Etudiants Tunisiens), the UTJ (Union Tunisienne de la Jeunesse), and the UNFT (Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes), are all appendages of the party. They serve as adjunctive arms of policy execution. The Tunisian Communist Party (PCT), illegal between 1963 and 1981, was granted official patronage so as to give the impression that the general elections of 1981 were pluralistic. The Communists, however, have no independent social or political base in the population, are extremely small in number, and must compete with the UGTT for the working class vote. They represent no immediate threat to the government. Two political associations remain: the MDS (Mouvement des Democrates Sociales) and the MUP (Mouvement de l'Unité Populaire), which until 1983 occupied the middle ground between political parties and protest movements.

The MDS emerged officially in June 1978. Its roots, however, go back to 1972 when a group of liberal reformers led by the Destourian militant and cabinet minister, Ahmed Mestiri,[51] was expelled from the party in the wake of the constitutional debate over succession. The liberals had criticized the single-party system, called for pluralism, democratization, and liberalization of the national political structures, and demanded a mixed economy with a larger public sector.[52] They were not anti-Bourguibists. On the contrary, they were marked by a pronounced tendency to accept Bourguibist tenets; and their concern focused on the deterioration of those tenets in the context of Tunisian sociopolitical evolution and the accompanying degeneration of civil liberties. Denied the right to reform the party from within, they formed a National Council for the Defense of Public Liberties in 1977 and proposed a national pact of all dissident elements working for political freedoms within the constitutional system. The council eventually organized itself into a party, but it was suppressed during the 1978 general strike on the pretext of antigovernment activity.[53]

As its name implies, the MDS represents nonideological humanism—center-left in the Destourian fold. The MUP, on the other hand, puts forward a program of

radical sociopolitical restructuring associated with the name of its founder, Ahmed Ben Salah, who, after escaping from prison, founded his party in 1973 from exile in Paris. The MUP, claiming to be the legitimate political incarnation of its founder's principles, demands an end to all exploitation by the PSD for the benefit of the few in the name of the many. But the MUP has never stated an intention to wrest power from its competitors by other than democratic means. The MSD and the MUP were legalized on 19 November 1983,* and their respective strengths must be reassessed in light of a gradual move towards pluralism.

Of all the political associations which the Tunisian government has not yet given full legal status and charter, the one that seems best able to cut across class, socioeconomic, and political lines in the Islamic movement. Diffuse rather than compact, transnational rather than specifically local in its ideological appeal, the Islamic movement gives shape to a variety of sentiments that are not more precisely articulated elsewhere in the context of the traditional framework of Tunisian political organizations. Tunisian Islamic sentiment takes multifarious forms, ranging from pietistic quietism to active revivalism. One aspect of Islamic expression, the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI), appears to have gained a place in the modern Tunisian Muslim consciousness and to have transformed it into a protest movement of considerable magnitude. The government views the MTI as a source of competition equal in political potential to the UGTT. The MTI is more dangerous to national equilibrium than the UGTT, however, because it can bring symbolic and metapolitical forces to bear in the name of traditional religious values, to which the state itself has given constitutional legitimacy (Islam is the official religion of the state).

To meet this popular current, Bourguiba proposes his own version of Islam. He considers it an aspect of the Tunisian national personality, the creation of which culminated the long struggle for independence. He sees Islam in Tunisia as dependent on the concepts of the Tunisian nation and peoplehood.[54] The political community that Bourguiba created, and that legitimizes the nation historically, is purely Tunisian. The cultural superstructure of this community manifests itself in a juridical and sociocultural personality that includes Islam as only one component. And since the Tunisian element of this personality was the authority upon which Bourguiba founded his political order, Islam must be denied a competitive role.[55]

This is not to say that Islam has no place in the working out of the definition of a Tunisian national personality; it is only to say that whenever Islam emerges as a countersymbol to the legitimacy of a specifically national personality—and this happens in times of disharmony,-of rapid change in the fundamental nature of institutions and in the loss of the monopoly over the channels of persuasion that characterizes the present climate of political transition in Tunisia—then religion must be subjected to state control.

Previously, it was not necessary to consider such an action. Bourguiba never admitted the dominant role of Islam in the formation of a modern Tunisian political

*It was not the MUP of Ben Salah that was legalized, but an offshoot of his party, the MUP-II, which disavowed the leader while maintaining much of his program intact.

13-inch MacBook Pro with Apple M1 chip
MacBook Pro 13-inch

culture. The Tunisian personality was an "a priori given" that lent its specific flavor to each formative phase of Tunisian history. The Islamic period merely forms the most recent expression, and Islam is conditioned by that personality as it adapts to historical change. To Bourguiba, there can be no doubt that the Tunisian personality existed before Islam and will survive Islam. Moreover, the modern history of Tunisia indicates that Bourguiba's philosophy and his party have given the Tunisian personality a secular political shape.[36]

Bourguiba has personified the historical development of the Tunisian personality. He has given it a juridical dimension, he has husbanded its unity through his charisma, and he has securely anchored its identity against the vicissitudes of time. He has legitimized a separate and distinct Tunisian political culture.

Attacks by those who would Islamicize this carefully constructed edifice are new only in degree. Bourguiba was challenged on the eve of independence by Salah Ben Youssef, one of his Destourian militants, on precisely this issue. Under this influence of Nasserism, Ben Youssef offered the Arabo-Islamic ideal of the Tunisian personality as the basis of the historical legitimacy of the state. Furthermore, he placed the concept of Tunisian national sovereignty in the context of a Pan-Arab, Pan-Islamic superstate. The contest, which Bourguiba won and for which Ben Youssef was to pay with his life, was waged over issues far more important than the meaning of legitimizing symbols. At stake was the choice between a declaration of full independence from France and an intermediary step of internal autonomy. Bourguiba's party supported the latter view, setting the stage for Ben Youssef's expulsion. This decision spared Tunisia the divisive war with France that Algeria was obliged to fight not long afterward. And Bourguiba was ensured Tunisia's future orientation towards the West by insisting that Tunisia serve to bridge the civilizations of the Orient and the Occident. He was thus able to invest the Tunisian personality with broader international significance without sacrificing its Arabo-Islamic values. And he succeeded in avoiding a closer identification of religion with the state, which might have drawn Tunisia into the maelstrom of Nasserist politics.

The identity that Bourguiba has chosen for Tunisia is a secular one in which the values of the Arabo-Islamic belief system remain subordinate to the state. Thus, the state claims to be based on Islamic principles yet avoids any implication of a casual link between Islam and state legitimacy. It is the charismatic personality of Bourguiba which serves to bridge the gap between actual Islamic sociopolitical practices and a Western secular theory of government. Bourguiba identifies himself with the traditional Islamic imamate and, as Imam,* arrogates to himself the obedience due to God and to the Prophet and his successors. Through the National Assembly he assimilates *shura*,** and he enjoins this body to offer guidance and counsel to the Imam on behalf of the Community of the Faithful. But is is the party

*Imam here signifies the temporal and spiritual functions of the head of the community of believers.
**Shura is the practice of Islamic consultation by means of which the Imam understands the consensus of the community.

that executes *shura*, since the Quran does not in any way define the organization of the state.[57]

Bourguiba attempts to reconcile those Islamic values that complement his view of the Tunisian personality with his understanding of the Tunisian political culture, which does not reflect a separation of church and state but rather an accommodation between separate spheres of influence. The Tunisian constitution makes Tunisia a Muslim state. The president holds both temporal and spiritual power and, as head of state, is responsible for the morality of its citizens. Within this framework, Bourguiba has undertaken the work of modernization and the definition of a Tunisian national and personal statute. Islam has not been disestablished but only accommodated to modern sociopolitical structures, and this fact serves as a constraint on the functioning of the Tunisian political system. It also leaves room for the probability that, in times of trouble, older, more traditional Arabo-Muslim currents will grow stronger and compete for the right to redefine the Tunisian system of governance.

These older traditions have a certain vitality among the elites. As Bourguiba's power diminishes, the elites have become less subject to authoritarian control and their place in the political community has become less subject to presidential discretion. They have been slowly turning back to traditional values—partially to control the challenge of traditionalism to their vested interests in political power, and partially to forestall the development of an autonomous movement in defense of Arabo-Muslim values among Tunisians who do not participate in the elite culture. On the structural level, traditional Arabo-Muslim values threaten the continuity of the state by insisting that the head of the state be elected according to the Bedouin equalitarian tradition. In Islam, however, succession to power was never an electoral process, and Bourguiba has shown great reluctance to institutionalize it because such institutionalization would deny the authority of an arbiter.

The elites must be content with a political structure that regulates political life in a segmental tribal fashion. Apart from the president, no single authority dominates. Coalitions shift with issues and personalities, alliances are temporary, and any individual effort to take supreme power without the sanction of the dominant coalition brings about a temporary unity of all coalitions in opposition. The elites criticize the latter behavior as traditional, unaware of the relationship between their behavior and the Islamic aspects of the tradition they are unconsciously espousing.[58]

Unfortunately, Bourguiba has not succeeded in subordinating Islam to his political ideology. His manipulation of religion is aimed at replacing Islam as a normative political system, not as a belief system. But the Islamic movement has resisted Bourguiba's political manipulation and has emerged as a system of political action.[59]

Islamism in Tunisia today is an ideology of political opposition against the existing order. It is an ideology of people disaffected from elite culture. Its moribund leader, in attempting to "desacralize" the sacred, has left nothing substantial in its place. This Islamism takes reestablishment of the Islamic political

order as a historical necessity and as an obligation of faith,[40] and it has adopted an anti-Western posture.

Perhaps the most significant reason for the revival of Islam in Tunisia is that the society is suffering from a lack of national direction. Secular norms have failed to create for Tunisians an integrated social, political, economic, and cultural view of the universe. The inappropriateness of the Bourguibist formula for the evolution of contemporary sociocultural and political norms has been exposed and there is a deficiency of rules for societal harmony. Those who respond violently to this absence of rules are most susceptible to the Islamist message—the unemployed, politically alienated youth. Yet those who dominate the Islamist movement are professionals from the middle and upper-middle classes, with humanities or technological backgrounds, who have been blocked in their mobility by a moribund political system. They take as their starting point the implicit assumption that the factionalized tribal politics of the elites is the source of Tunisian national instability.

In general, it can be said that the Islamists in and outside the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique are concerned with defining the authentic; that is specific Islamic content of the Tunisian sociopolitical personality. This search for Islamic authenticity challenges the secular foundations of the state and raises the question of religion as an instrument of modernization. But whereas Bourguiba had used the issue of the preservation of Islam against the assimilationist policies of French colonialism in the interests of an accommodation of Islam with development and national sovereignty, the Islamists challenge Bourguiba's vision of Islam for its failure to provide prosperity for the Muslims of Tunisia. This has provoked an attack against Bourguiba and his "cult of personality" because the state *is* the president. In making Islam the official religion of the state, Bourguiba has named himself the "secular" imam of all Tunisians. Thus, the Islamists cannot avoid the accusation of antistate activity. From the perspective of the state, all Muslim activity that smacks of militancy is potentially a threat to the legitimacy of the state. From the perspective of the Islamists, the attack on the cult of Bourguiba simply replicates the struggle of the Islamic reformers of the last century—the *Salafiyyah*—to cleanse and purify Islam of its worship of saints who stood as intercessors between men and God. Moreover, the Islamists argue that apart from the purifying effect of Islam, an attack on Bourguiba is merited because it permits once again the unfettered exercise of *ijtihad** in all matters spiritual and temporal. Bourguiba, as the "secular" imam, had arrogated to himself the exerciseof *ijtihad* in the pursuit of non-Islamic interests.

Yet Islamist sentiment has been slow in coalesçing. From the time of the foundation of the republic to the period directly preceding the general strike of 1978, one could say that a militant Islamist feeling did not exist in Tunisia. The government had placed its Islamic policy in the hands of high ecclesiastical personalities who, as functionaries of the state, executed the state's policy on

*The systematic judgment of qualified individuals based on the recognized material sources of Islamic revelation.

religious matters. The sole murmur of discontent with the state's Islamic policy came in 1970-1971 when, following the Ben Salah debacle of 1969, certain young Tunisians from the faculties of theology and law at the University of Tunis expressed the view that the body politic was undergoing a crisis not of the economy but of social morality. This time of reflection produced a Society for the Preservation of the Quran among law students and teachers. But although the society proposed itself as an alternative voice in the reevaluation of the nation's moral and social objectives, it did not constitute a mass movement. At the head of the society was Sheikh Mohammad Salah en-Naifar, a religious dignitary attached to the Zitouna Mosque in the capital, who stated that the duty of all believers was to level a moral censure on the government but not to attempt to seize power. Sheikh en-Naifer's realistic vision did not reject participation in the political process. In fact, his ideas closely paralleled those of the Algerian religious reformer, Ferhat Abbas, who clearly militated for a secular state so that the state would not interfere in religious affairs on the pretext that it was Muslim.[61]

It was from among the more radical members of that society, of whom several were reputed to have connections with the Muslim Brethren in Egypt—hence the name *Khuwanjiyya,* by which the movement was to be popularly called—that the MTI was formed. In 1977, during the fast month of Ramadan, the MTI was reputed to have provoked attacks on cafes in Sfax, Tunisia's second largest city. In 1979 and again in 1981, MTI encouraged disturbances at the University of Tunis. With the first signs of activism came the publication of the journals *Ma'arifa* (Knowledge) and *al-Mujtama'* (Society) and the rise to preeminence of three Islamists: Abdelfatah Muru, Rashid Ghanushi, and Hassan Ghodhbani. The MTI remained an ambiguous organization, but the Islamic government it demanded was not very well defined.

The MTI critique of the government is based on economic unrest, widening social gaps between classes, corruption of the ruling elites, and the Westernization of public culture; it is a well-founded critique.[62] By 1980, as a reaction to Khomeini and the Libyan attempt to foment rebellion at Gafsa, the government had taken notice of the movement and had sought, without apparent success, to undercut its social base by restoring old mosques and building new ones throughout the country.

Since 1981, however, the government has followed a hard, repressive line toward members of the MTI. Favored in the beginning because the government had believed the Islamists would counterbalance Marxists in student circles, the MTI found itself ultimately deprived of a legal status when it failed to gain 5 percent of the popular vote during the national electoral campaign in 1981. The government, then, has demonstrated not only its own ambivalence towards the new Islamism, but also an ambiguity concerning the role religion should play in an expansion of the democratic process.

The leaders of the movement, the majority of whom have been jailed since 1981, show the same ambivalence. Sheikh Muru, who was released in the summer of 1983 because of ill-health, has stated that the Western democratic experience would

be extremely beneficial for the MTI to the extent that it permits various currents of thought the opportunity for exposure in theory and in practice; he adds the caveat, however, that since the MTI does not aim at seizing power, it is in no hurry to join the Tunisian experience in pluralism. He contends that as long as a society is a bastardized creation which hesitates in reaffirming its ideological roots, all political experiments are doomed to failure.[63]

Ghodhbani, on the other hand, who represents a faction within the MTI called the Mouvement Islamique de la Concertation, rejects the suggestion of compromise that Muru's passive reformism implies. Like Muru, Ghodhbani practiced law before responding to the call of Islam. Unlike Muru, he is a reformed Marxist of a highly radical persuasion. According to Ghodhbani, state and society are emanations of an indivisible Islamic community. Government must be of the people, sanctioned by God, and reflective of the consultation of the Prophet with his early Medinan disciples. No Islamic state today—not even Saudi Arabia—approximates this populist base of Islamic power. In the sense that the Medinan community most fully expresses the *shura*, it can be presented to the people as the symbol of a reconstituted and historically validated "Islamic Party"; and thus should be permitted to compete in the Tunisian political system. To Ghodhbani, no other ideology suffices. If capitalism promotes only license, and communism a justice that sacrifices liberty for reasons of state, then only Islam can be multidimensional.[64]

On one principle, all three leaders agree, with Rashid Ghannushi being the most vocal: that the MTI will fight "folkloric" Islam and the Islam of the past, which has furnished Bourguiba a conveniently degenerate model of reform to resurrect. Around that model, the state has built a corps of religious functionaries whose sole purpose is to satisfy their thirst for power by manipulating the people's need for the sacred and for the veneration of pious personages. Opposition to this cult of saints is easily translated into opposition to Bourguiba's intercession in the politics of daily Muslim life through party and state. Salah Jourchi, the editor of *al-Mujtama'* and himself the leader of the MTI faction, Mouvement Islamique Progréssiste, makes this point in the context of a more forward-looking interpretation of the Quran in imitation of the Mujahidin-i Khalq of Iran.[65]

It should be mentioned here that so long as the Islamists relate their concept of state and society to God, the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition, no politician is worthy of their allegiance. This goes especially for Colonel Qadhdhafi, whom all the leaders proclaim an atheist, Communist, and miscreant.[66] In sum, the militants have concerned themselves with the rules according to which society is governed, the link between personal belief and the exercise of authority, the legitimacy of armed revolt against the established government, and the conduct of a Muslim state in its relations with non-Muslim nations.

The Tunisian government does not fear the power of the Islamists as a movement per se. What concerns the government is the possibility that in the struggles of the Islamists against the Communists or even against Qadhdhafi, whose hand is

suspected in the evolution of Tunisian Islamist protest, the MTI will make an objective alliance with a politician of decided Pan-Arab views who may use the Islamist movement to influence the succession crisis.[67] Such an alliance might deliver Tunisia into the camp of the radical Arabs and into the morass of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The army runs the risk of succumbing to this particular infection; and as a guardian of national integrity, it must remain ideologically neutral. The discovery of a plot to establish an Islamist cell in the air force in the summer of 1983 shook the armed forces. Those responsible were dealt with severely, and were found to be allied with a Jordanian branch of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood.[68] This event brought home most vividly the potential for a collusion between external Islamist forces, representing tendencies hostile to the national sovereignty of Tunisia, and indigenous antistate elements. Consequently, the Tunisian government has put itself on record that it will tolerate no such interference in its internal affairs; and its present policy aims at the repression of Islamist sympathies.

CHAPTER 6

THE LIBYAN FACTOR

The influence of Libya and its mercurial leader, Mu'ammar Qadhdhafi, must be reckoned with in any decision the Tunisian government makes in regional affairs. The Libyan factor in Tunisian politics has not always been clear, however. More perceived than physical, Libyan pressure is nevertheless capable of being felt in all domains of Tunisian domestic and international politics with the exception of the Islamic movement, where no direct connection to Tripoli has yet been established. The armed forces, in particular, fear the influence of the Libyan leader. Qadhdhafi has maneuvered some elites towards a foreign policy compatible with his vision of an Arab North Africa under Libyan hegemony, leaving no doubt in the minds of the military and some members of the government that Libya is demanding a strong voice in the shaping of events in the post-Bourguibist era.

Since the failure of Egypt to win a total victory over Israel in the October War of 1973, Libyan Pan-Arab inclinations have become more and more pronounced both diplomatically and militarily. As the successor state to Egypt in the drive toward Pan-Arab unity, freedom from dependence on the West, and the elimination of Israel, the Libyan regime has dedicated itself to the creation of a new Pan-Arab union in which it will play the central role. The Maghreb has been targeted by the Libyans for a diplomatic onslaught in the larger context of a Muslim African union to include Libya and such countries as Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal. Qadhdhafi aims at bringing to bear the combined forces of a continent against Israel, and the West, with Libya as its military spearhead. For this purpose, he has begun to build a conventional army much larger than the Libyan demographic base is able to support—one that has a large supply of modern Soviet weaponry. Such military preponderance in Libya's favor signals the possibility of coercion, and the Muslim nations of North Africa—Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia—committed in principle to a Maghreb united by mutual ties of economic cooperation, judge all Libyan overtures to be opportunistic and self-serving. Hence, it came as a great surprise when in January 1974, Bourguiba and Qadhdhafi, in spite of their

differences in ideology and styles of leadership, announced from the Tunisian island of Djerba the merger of their two countries.

This incident, which seemed like an aberration of normally rational Tunisian political thinking, actually had logical antecedents. With the appointment of Muhammad Masmoudi as foreign minister in 1970, Tunisian foreign policy began to shift away from the pro-Westernism of Bourguiba. Masmoudi conducted a vigorous campaign of fence-mending with the more left-leaning Arab and African states and with the Eastern bloc nations. In addition, symbolic pronouncements on behalf of the Palestinians were uttered.[69] The campaign came to an end when Masmoudi persuaded an ailing Bourguiba to sign the unity agreement with Qadhdhafi. This was clearly the result of Bourguiba's progressive mental and physical weakness, however, and when he realized what he had done he fired Masmoudi and allowed the agreement to lapse.

In retrospect, the Libyan venture had sound roots in Tunisian domestic realities. Still reeling from the shock of the precipitous decentralization of its economic structures after 1969, and desperate for new sources of capital financing for its national recovery, Tunisia had turned to Libya in the belief that whatever the Libyan political quid pro quo turned out to be, it could be managed to Tunisia's advantage. A merger would not only secure a guaranteed source of capital for development but would also facilitate the export of the Tunisian unemployed, whose numbers were growing in the early seventies at an alarming rate.

Tunisia got more than it bargained for. Qadhdhafi's disappointment knew no limits. He refused to permit the merger to lapse. He pressed Tunis on the implementation of the Djerba agreement. He proposed a referendum on ratification. He made financial credits conditional on the execution of various cooperative programs. He threatened to expel Tunisian guest workers. Most importantly, he rejected Tunisia's proposal to arbitrate the demarcation of Tuniso-Libyan territorial waters, thought to be rich in petroleum, on the pretext that both countries had already agreed to unite. And in March 1975, he sought to pressure Tunis into unification by inviting himself to a religious ceremony in the Tunisian city of Kairouan; but instead, Bourguiba pronounced in Qadhdhafi's presence his famous sermon on the Imamate.[70] In a word, Tuniso-Libyan relations were frozen.

In February 1977, relations took a turn for the worse when both Libya and Tunisia sent frigates into the Gulf of Gabès to press conflicting claims to oil rights on the continental shelf. This situation was eased somewhat when Libya agreed to submit the problem to the Court of International Justice at The Hague for adjudication. But in January 1980, relations once again soured. A commando raid on the southern mining town of Gafsa, on the anniversary of the general strike of 1978, apparently had the aim of sparking armed revolution inside the country. Libya was clearly implicated in training the rebels, but denied that it was the instigator of the disturbance.

Clearly, Qadhdhafi was insisting that his desires for regional hegemony should be respected. But by 1982, the Libyan leader was in a more conciliatory mood because

his politics had forced Libya into a self-imposed isolation in North Africa. He had lost his gambit with the United States to secure a 200-mile limit of his territorial waters in the Gulf of Sirta, where two of his fighter aircraft were shot down. He had been chastened by the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) opposition to his involvement in Chad 15 months earlier. His encouragement of Islamism in Algeria, and his support in the former Spanish Sahara of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquiet al-Hamra and Río del Oro (Polisario) at a time when Algeria and Morocco were beginning to seek a rapprochement over the delicate problem of the Saharan war, made him *persona non grata* in Algiers. Meanwhile, Muhammad Mzali had been appointed prime minister in Tunis; and Mzali's continuing effort to secure Arab financing for Tunisia's sixth Five-Year Plan demonstrated to Qadhdhafi once more the virtue of practical diplomacy over tactical subversion.

Thus, in January 1982, with Bourguiba out of the country for a health cure, Qadhdhafi paid a surprise visit to Tunis in order to lay the basis for a meeting with Bourguiba in February on the day when the International Court of Justice at The Hague decided to divide the Gulf of Gabès between the two countries (albeit to Libya's advantage). Qadhdhafi later returned to Bourguiba the Djerba unity document, paving the way for Tunisia's admission into the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The burnishing of Qadhdhafi's image in Tunisia, which occasioned a spate of new commercial agreements, revealed a streak of latent pragmatism in the Libyan leader's behavior. By the same token, it also revealed the weakness of Qadhdhafi's African position. The issue in 1982 was the question of Qadhdhafi's standing with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which he was to host in Tripoli that winter. The question of admitting the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) to the organization at an earlier summit in Addis Abba had exploded into great resentment against Libya from 19 of its 56 members, especially from Morocco. And this event threatened not only the Tripoli summit but the future of the OAU as an instrument of Libyan penetration into Africa. Qadhdhafi's Tunisian rapprochement was calculated to enlist Tunisian neutrality on the question.

From 1982 onward, Qadhdhafi assiduously cultivated personalities on all levels of the Tunisian government. His overtures to Habib Achour, president of the UGTT, were calculated to bring the trade union to a consciousness of the new circumstances which the Tunisian economy was being forced to confront. And the UGTT, sensing the power of Libyan capital and the availability of a Libyan job market to revive the fortunes of its adherents, began to agitate for closer Libyan ties. Organized labor's turn toward Libya was an obvious and predictable move in the context of the sixth Five-Year Plan which, in calling for 60,000 new jobs a year, was expected to fall 10,000 short.

But the Libyan sword had a double edge. Libya's interest in the personalism of Tunisian politics further divided the UGTT and the government. In 1982 and 1983, Qadhdhafi's pressure was everywhere felt. Although he had finally become aware of Tunisia's enduring moderate position in the Islamic and Arab world—an

awareness underlined by the presence of the Arab League in Tunis, where it had been removed in 1979 after Sadat's peace with Israel caused the organization to desert Cairo—Qadhdhafi insisted on a more radical Tunisian position on the Lebanese question; and the Tunisians were encouraged to conform by the tacit American support for the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which stimulated Tunis to mobilize the Arab League against the Jewish state.[71]

Regional and international ties will play a vital role in the consolidation of power by Bourguiba's successor, and they cannot help but determine the post-Bourguibian framework in which Tunisia must seek to reconstruct its security. Whether Qadhdhafi is liked or not, he is an essential actor in the Tunisian dilemma.

The United States has been slow in recognizing the basic need for a mutual understanding between these two neighbors. The American diplomatic offensive occasioned by the Reagan initiative of 1 September 1982 aimed at furthering US strategic interests in the Middle East because of the bilateral competition between the superpowers, but it was also meant to neutralize Libyan influence. American diplomacy has portrayed Qadhdhafi as a threat to Tunisia's stability, and the American attitude has put Tunisia in a bind: Libyan temperance is a sine qua non of Tunisia's continued existence, and the Tunisian government does not want to exacerbate the Libyan potential for troublemaking, which the events at Gafsa in 1980 made palpably apparent, even if some Tunisian officials tend to view the Qadhdhafi threat with some skepticism.[72] But the American attitude did find understanding listeners in Bourguiba and his military leaders, thus strengthening the position of those in the Tunisian administration who were both pro-American and anti-Qadhdhafi.

In the final analysis, the events of the early 1980s obliged the Tunisian government to appeal to the United States for an increase in foreign military sales. Tunisia intended to purchase equipment that would serve to modernize the armed forces and reduce the probability of a Libyan armed incursion into Tunisian territory. The decision to purchase arms, and in particular fighter aircraft and tanks, was not popular among those who believed that the earmarking of additional funds for defense would provoke a serious disequilibrium in domestic development programs and, possibly, incite Colonel Qadhdhafi to attack Tunisia. Coming at a time when Tunisia could least afford it, and offered as a solution to Libyan problems that might never materialize, the arms modernization effort produced a noticeable strain in an already charged internal environment. And this strain has contributed to the most recent—perhaps the most serious—breakdown in the Tunisian political order.

CHAPTER 7

THE BREAD RIOTS OF 1983-84

By the summer of 1983, the ground had been prepared for the worst riots in the history of the Tunisian republic. The riots broke out in late December when the government lifted the subsidies on cereal products. That the Tunisian government did not heed the warnings of 1977, when the Egyptians took to the streets over the same question, illustrates the extent to which the government and the party had lost touch with important national issues. Tunisian leaders were mired in the fatal complacency that is prevalent when problems of economics, defense, and foreign relations are taken seriously only insofar as they impinge upon the delicate balance of inter-elite competition. The effect of this competition on economic strategy was profound. It was also predictable in the absence of a long-range solution to the deterioration of the lot of the average Tunisian.

As early as June 1983, the issue of economic priorities had been broached at the highest level. The minister of plans, Mansur Moalla, publicly criticized the Sixth Five-Year Plan for being too ambitious; he militated for progressive relaxation of price controls to stimulate local industry. But economic austerity was unpopular with Prime Minister Mzali, for political reasons, and Moalla was dismissed. Having established a distance between himself and Moalla, who was well known for his technical expertise, Mzali not long afterwards reversed his field and took Moalla's position on the issue of cereal subsidies. The reason for this change of heart was clear: In the Caisse de Compensation, a special fund reserved for cereal subsidies, the receipts for 1983 amounted to 150 million dinars, the expenditures had been 184 million, and a deficit of 74 million dinars had already been projected for Fiscal Year 1984. On 19 September, when the president permitted Mzali to lift the subsidy, Moalla had been dismissed from the government; and in October, another opponent of Mzali's, Minister of Economy Abdelaziz Lasram, handed in his resignation in protest. The prime minister firmly believed, however, that by raising social security allocations, aid to families, and the minimum wage for industrial workers in the public sector (SMIG), the worst repercussions of this policy could be avoided. The elites were polarized over the issue, and the prime minister was conscious of a loss of popularity among his cabinet members and with the UGTT.

Mzali's principal concern in this matter was to consolidate his own political position, and he endeavored to do so by creating a new basis for interelite consensus.

On 19 November, the prime minister tried to sweeten the bitter pill of this unpopular action by legitimizing the MDS and the MUP-II. Measured against the prime minister's manipulation of the 1981 municipal elections, in which these two parties were allowed to present independent lists but were not promised legal status* unless they captured 5 percent of the popular vote, his largesse was greeted with skepticism. And it was not long before Mzali's sudden turn toward liberalism was attacked as a scheme to burnish his democratic image in the face of rising violence among university students and the organized hostility of the Islamists who were excluded from the benefits of this grand gesture. In response, the prime minister promised passage of a law authorizing organization of any opposition political party that pledged to respect the integrity of the state and to follow the general humanistic principles of Bourguibism.

Perhaps the most important consequence of the new political liberalism was the wedge it drove in an already fragmented trade union movement. In 1981, seven members of the UGTT executive had risked schism by joining a national front list with the PSD. Elected to the National Assembly, these same UGTT deputies now took advantage of Mzali's policy to declare that multipartyism was contradictory without multiunionism. They then accused the president of the UGTT of personal malfeasance, and launched an assault on his position that the UGTT should remain an apolitical body. This led to an attempt to break the monopoly of the UGTT and create a rival trade union movement. The consequences of this action would weaken the UGTT in the aftermath of the riots.

On 26 November, the prime minister took advantage of his momentum to force the removal from office of the minister of equipment, Muhammad Sayah. Formerly director of the PSD, Sayah had been a confidant of the president. Sayah had been an outspoken hard-line advocate of the one-party system, and his disgrace removed the last major obstacle to limited pluralism and the ascendancy of Mzali among the elites.

In middle December the MSD, which was the strongest of the two newly legalized parties, held its first congress. In preparation for the 1985 municipal and national elections, it declared the pillars of its political faith to be democracy, socialism, and in an effort to co-opt the Islamists, Arabo-Islamism. The prime minister had never seemed more secure as executor of Bourguiba's policies and as his successor in office.

That confidence was broken on 29 December when riots over the expected rise in the price of bread erupted in the southern desert towns of Kebili and Douz. The disturbances soon spread north to Kasserine and then, on 2 January, turned

*It was the actual MUP of Ben Salah that presented itself for the elections of 1981. With its failure to obtain legal status, the party split, much to the satisfaction of the Tunisian government.

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southward again to the coastal city of Gabès and its satellites, El Hamma. By 3 January, the full force of the riots was being felt in the capital itself and in Tunisia's second largest city, Sfax; and the forces of order showed little or no ability to contain the rioters. In fact, the army had already intervened in Kasserine.

On 2 January, the cabinet met in Tunis. The prime minister criticized the interior minister, Driss Guiga, for the failure of the police and the national guard to contain the disturbances. Guiga, a sworn enemy of the prime minister, laid the blame squarely on the government's subsidy policy and demanded a roll-back of prices.

On 3 January, Mzali went on national television to announce that the government would deal harshly with the rioters and that the lifting of the bread subsidy would not be countenanced. A curfew was declared in the capital. The army had to be called in to replace the national guard, the police, the Brigade de l'Orde Publique. The president, who was visiting his home town of Monastir to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of his party in nearby Ksar Hellal, now returned in haste to the capital.

On 5 January, the UGTT threatened a nationwide strike; and the interior minister caused a cabinet crisis when he declared that he would resign if the rise in bread prices was not immediately annulled. This desperate move came after accusations were made against him of incompetence, fraudulent dealings, and the use of his ministry for personal gain. Bourguiba first agreed to a 50-percent rollback, then went on television to announce a return to the previous policy of full subsidies and a new national budget. Sensing that the political winds were blowing against him, Guiga charged his subordinate, Ahmed Ghedira, the director of the national guard, to go to the president and demand the resignation of the prime minister. But he had overplayed his hand; with the determination of a man now in control, Bourguiba fired Guiga.

The excuse that Bourguiba offered to the people concerning the situation which led to the riots was implausible. He made a statement to the effect that his initial decision to lift the subsidy in September was prompted by a discussion with the mayor of Tunis, who had observed that the people were tossing great quantities of uneaten bread into rubbish heaps. Nevertheless, scores of Tunisians were left dead or wounded. But the disturbances were only superficially caused by government complacency. The root causes lay in the nature of socioeconomic change within the country over the past two decades. A population explosion, an economic growth that destroyed old modes of production, a new sociology of urban dwellers, and a distribution of wealth in which 20 percent of Tunisians controlled 50 percent of the resources while the poorest 20 percent controlled only 5 percent of the resources contributed to a sense of strain and tension.[73]

The passivity of the once strong union movement, and the "quick fix" of possible savings, encouraged the government to take the unpopular measure of lifting cereal subsidies in total disregard of the need to prepare a consensus for so important a change. The government looked at the question of cereal subsidies as a problem susceptible to quantifiable analysis. It reasoned that since 470 grams of

cereals per day absorbed about 5 percent of an average industrial worker's salary of 95 dinars a month, the rise in price of a loaf of bread by 108 percent would only increase that monthly expenditure by 3 percent.[74] Totally forgotten was that the majority of the Tunisian workers were not salaried, that 15 to 20 percent of the active males were jobless, that the possibility of an expanding job market had already been doomed by constant economic crisis, and that the UGTT, which the government had enlisted as a confederate in the scheme to lift subsidies, had ignored for years the needs of the jobless. The International Monetary Fund and the dismissed minister of plans, Moalla, had warned that the Tunisian dilemma arose from deep structural deficiencies which required a program of economic austerity.

It was clear from the course of the riots that revolution was not in the minds of the rioters and that subversive organizations played no part in instigating the week of destruction. The riots broke out spontaneously and spread in a pattern from countryside to city that suggested, in vivid geographic terms, the disparity between the underdeveloped rural hinterland and the more affluent coastal towns and cities. The apolitical nature of the riots, and the wise decision by Bourguiba to soften his government's position, saved his regime and ultimately his country. By the second week of January, the regime was able to reflect, in an atmosphere of restored calm, on the events that very nearly brought an end to Bourguibian democracy.

If it was fortunate that the republic survived, it was unfortunate that the government looked immediately for a scapegoat. On 11 January, the government opened a commission of inquiry into the activities of the police during the riots. On 30 January, the commission found its scapegoat in the person of Guiga. He was charged with disarming the police in an attempt to embarrass the prime minister and cause the government to fall, purchasing arms for the police at a personal profit from a Brazilian company, and using his office to deal in drugs. Subsequently, a military man was named director-general of national security: Brig Gen Zayn al-Abdin Bin Ali, who had occupied the position during the Black Thursday riots of 26 January 1978. From 1964 to 1974, this soldier had been director of military intelligence. The appointment of this hard-liner signaled the government's intention to follow repressive policies in the post-riot period; and Bin Ali appointed an army colonel to replace Ghedira, Guiga's infamous emmissary to Bourguiba, as head of the national guard. On 5 February, the Tunisian National Assembly began obediently to debate the new national budget.

During the entire episode, the UGTT remained unsatisfied; and it was once again divided over its attitude toward the government. The Postal Workers' Union and the Teachers' Union voted to press the issue of wages, which they believed to have been treated cosmetically by a government anxious to buy the silence of the working class during the riots. Wildcat strikes broke out on 19 February. The dissident seven members of the UGTT executive, who had been expelled in 1981 for forming an electoral coalition with the government, used these strikes as a pretext to form a second national union, the Union Nationale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UNTT). On March, UGTT President Achour denounced the UNTT as an

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attempt by leftists to split the national trade union movement and to weaken his own power as head of the UGTT. And so the fragile alliance between the left and center, which had held the UGTT together since the infamous days of 1978, dissolved completely.

In late March, the commission of inquiry pronounced its verdict. The causes of national instability were not broached at all. Rather, the commission condemned personalities, in particular the interior minister and his cronies, thus vindicating once more the political supremacy of the prime minister as heir apparent to Bourguiba. The strikes of the postal workers and teachers were severely suppressed by the government with the support of the UGTT, now threatened by its left. A new director of the PSD was announced—an old apparatchik whose task it would be to reinvigorate the party. And those newspapers and magazines representing the newly enfranchised opposition parties that dared to criticize the government's return to the status quo were summarily closed down.[75] By the spring of 1984, a deceptive calm had settled over the country.

Part 2

The Role of the Military Establishment in Tunisian Politics

Never trust the experts: to the theologian nothing is pure; to the doctor nothing is wholesome; to the soldier nothing is safe.

Lord Salisbury

CHAPTER 1

THE MILITARY FORCES

Among the military establishments in the Arab world, the Tunisian military is perhaps unique. It is a nonpraetorian, highly professional body that has never mounted a coup nor fomented revolution against the state, has never involved itself directly in the Arab-Israeli confrontation, has never been the instrument of national independence except as an adjunctive arm of civilian policy, and has always answered to the authority of the state through the intermediary of a civilian minister of defense. This does not imply that among military personnel there is no difference of opinion;[76] it does imply, however, the existence of an unspoken agreement concerning the general principles and ideals that animate the Tunisian state system. One can therefore characterize the Tunisian military as an establishment dedicated singlemindedly to the defense of the national integrity from all enemies, foreign and domestic. In its devotion to duty, God, and country, it most closely resembles the French Army of the Third Republic. And it is unquestionably both subservient to and the promoter of Bourguibist ideals.

This military force reflects Bourguiba's views of the military role in the nation-building process. For Bourguiba, the role of the military is primarily defensive. Bourguiba's view puts emphasis on the threat to the nation from within; and a strong nation, socialized to a single political world-view and mobilized to protect national interests through an aggregation of those interests by a monoparty system, provides the best security against internal weakness and the probability of attack from the outside. His view takes into consideration Tunisia's small demographic base, its lack of natural resources, and the absence of physical boundaries capable of protecting the country from aggression. With respect to the Kemalist ideology of the state, which requires that the ideological hegemony of a system of alliances among the different factions rest on a common consent to secularism and westernism, the armed forces ensure that no acts of violence will succeed in desacralizing these Bourguibist ideals.[77] As this hegemony guarantees the perpetuation of Tunisian nationalism, the armed forces' primary task is to serve in

the capacity of an *école de civisme*,[78] thereby translating these values into the organizational form of a truly citizen army.

Thus, the Tunisian military defends not only the national sovereignty but also the "faith" and the status quo, as both symbol and instrument of the unity of purpose between government and citizenry that links people directly to the nation-building enterprise.[79] To this end, Bourguiba denied the military any role in the decision-making process as a political elite. Nor has the military had the opportunity to play the historical role of the initiators of modernization. Bourguiba has maintained the purity of the armed forces by disenfranchizing both officer and enlisted corps, and has denied them the right of political association even in the ruling Destourian Socialist Party. Adherence to any competing political party is a crime that can carry capital penalties. Bourguiba's mistrust of the armed forces is an aspect of his political autocentrism, but it is also a manifestation of the fear that a strong army may be the carrier of political infection. The historical experience of independence with its concern from the unity of cadres in the struggle to consolidate sovereignty reflects an appreciation of the damage that can be done by an involvement in larger Arab causes.

Bourguiba has gone so far as to give the military the role of last instance in the suppression of internal dissent, depending instead on the separate forces of a gendarmerie, a national guard, and a special paramilitary Brigade of Public Order, all organized under the ministry of interior. Moreover, he has made the size of the military and the quantity of its armaments commensurate with its perceived function. In this way, the demands of national stability and the paucity of resources that the state can consecrate to defense dovetail neatly in justifying a limited combat potential for the Tunisian armed forces.

The Tunisian armed forces consist of approximately 30,000 army, 2,500 air force, and 2,600 naval personnel. The 5,000 men of the gendarmerie and the 3,500 troops of the national guard form the paramilitary auxiliary of the national armed services.[80] The Tunisian army counted 3,000 officers and men in 1956, grouped into a single regiment with plans for expansion to one light division. With the introduction of a selective conscription law in 1959, its number rose to 8,000 in 1960. By the late 1970s, the army ranks had risen to 18,000; the present figure was reached in the early 1980s. The national guard, which consisted of 300 men in 1956, has increased tenfold to its present force level. The navy and the air force, each 500 strong in officers and men in 1966, have received short shrift. In fact, the Tunisian air force remains today the least developed in North Africa.[81]

A shortage of manpower has never existed in Tunisia. In the mid-1970s, for example, 44 percent of the population was under 15 years of age. There were 1.5-million males aged 15 to 49, and 850,000 of those were considered fit for military service. Each year, approximately 60,000 reach the conscription of age of 20.[82] Manning the armed forces was therefore no drain on the labor force. But, because conscription was easy to avoid after 1959, the number of draftees dropped considerably. This, in turn, exacerbated perennially high unemployment. Thus, for the proper manning of the armed forces and the maintenance of a stable military

organization, new volunteers and the reenlistment of soldiers were relied upon. In all branches of the military, regulars comprise more than half the number of men.[83] No more than 2 percent of the gross national product went to defense in the 1970s, and the military share of the total government budget was consistently less than 7 percent.[84] Defense expenditures have increased greatly from 1977 to the mid-1980s, but three to five times as much money has been spent on education.[85]

The government's efforts to maintain acceptable force levels with minimal increases in personnel illustrates Bourguiba's view of the military role in Tunisian society. But it also exposes a general problem for third world countries:

> Inasmuch as most third world armies are designed to keep order within their countries and not operate effectively abroad, the primary issue for their governments is the loyalty of the officer corps not their military efficiency. Since such loyalty has to be rewarded, the officers have to be paid well and treated well. Corruption is often the norm; the civil government . . . cannot measure military effectiveness, but it can measure the probability that an ambitious officer will effect a coup.[86]

This need to placate the military while maintaining a viable defense force was not lost on the Tunisian political elite. In 1966 Ahmed Mestiri, then secretary of state for defense, proposed a long-range plan for military modernization. He stressed both the technical ability of the officer corps and the defensive arming of a citizen soldiery.[87] Ten years later, the notion of a comprehensive "people's defense" in the form of large reserves was stressed by Defense Minister Abdallah Farhat. He was responding to pressure for the enlargement of the military to deter the growing Libyan threat, but his proposal was also a counterargument to a precipitous increase in regular forces.[88]

Like the society in general, the officer corps is undergoing great change; yet of all social strata, the officers mirror best the origins and the socialization of the political elites. Bourguiba has made it clear to the military that both they and the civilian power establishment must accept the principle that places all responsibility for the state in the hands of the political apparatus. And Bourguiba has been elected to the presidency for almost 30 years.[89] The military's loyalty to Bourguiba cannot be in doubt. Political differences do exist within the corps, but those differences depend on each individual officer's perception of the state and his reaction to its growing polarization. Those perceptions, are based on the conditions under which the officer entered the service, his expectations of the state, his cohesiveness with fellow officers, and his conception of a military role in the post-Bourguiba era.

That the officer corps does not perceive the state in a uniform manner can be inferred from the fact that it was formed in four classes or "promotions" at specifically different junctures of time in the evolution of the republic. The first class graduated from the French military academy at Saint Cyr in the first two years of independence. It saw active duty and combat during the Battle of Bizerte in 1961 and in the postindependence struggle for total French decolonization. The only class to have felt the formative presence of the French, it is responsible for the tradition of

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military élan and the congruence of military-state relations in the struggle of independence. Each successive class represents a relative distance from that critical juncture in time.

The second class, formed in the early and middle 1960s in Europe but not exclusively in France, received a more technical education, which coincided with the state's new direction toward engagement on all levels of society, the cooperativization of the national economy, and the proclamation of neutralism in the aftermath of the Pan-Arab debacle of 1967. This class now fills posts of senior command in all the services.

The third class received much of its training in the United States in the early 1970s when ties with France were gradually weakening and the country was being drawn into closer dependence on the international market place. This was a time of relative disengagement of the state in national affairs and the beginning of a more articulated opposition to government policies from outside the monoparty system. The class has been more exposed than its predecessors to external ideological currents, and it is more sensitive to these currents as political options applicable to the Tunisian environments.

The fourth class differs little from its predecessor other than in the fact that it entered the junior ranks of the corps following the general strike of 1978 when Bourguiba and the ability of the monoparty system to provide prosperity to Tunisians was openly questioned. The difference between this class and the others is that its members were born after independence and therefore have no personal experience of the values that brought the country to self-determination. In sum, one may speak not only ideologically of a different environment in which the officer corps has been formed but also sociologically of a "generational gap" implicit in the rise of new societal elements with conflicting aspirations.

Another factor that may contribute to the enlarging of this socioideological "generation gap" within the ranks is the widening division of the country into regions of unequal development and growth. The national movement, and the political elite on which it has always been based, sprang from the petty bourgeoisie of the relatively prosperous coastal regions. These "new men" have always favored the coast as the locus of national industrial growth. Its axes of political and commercial importance, Sousse and Monastir, the region of Tunis and the Cape Bon and, to a certain degree, the country's second largest city, Sfax, make the choice altogether logical. These regions boast the highest rate of literacy, a sedentary population with a tradition of high culture, a base of capital and skilled manpower, and a transportation infrastructure previously implanted during the colonial period. By contrast, the far south, west, and northwest, especially those areas immediately abutting the Algerian and the Libyan frontiers, have been less favored in the course of internal development and suffer from a relative lack of integration into the national economy. The implications of such a regionalization of poverty are ominous if one is to judge by the 1984 bread riots, which broke out not in the capital city among workers but in the towns of the disadvantaged south among the unemployed and the semiskilled. The society is divided into have and

have-not areas, and the have-not areas are underrepresented in the political decision-making process.

The composition of the military forces reflects this nationwide imbalance. Drawing overwhelmingly from the coastal regions and Greater Tunis, the officer corps mirrors the origins and the socialization of the ruling political elites. But this relative homogeneity is offset by the conscripted rank and file, which tends to be filled by soldiers drawn from depressed areas because it is difficult for young men without a viable means of livelihood, or ways to perform alternative service, to avoid military conscription.[90] These troops may be less responsive to the military's mission of self-defense as long as self-defense is understood to be the suppression of internal political dissidence. And the Third Republic élan of the officer corps may fade as the Saint Cyr class and the second class of officers, formed in the early 1960s, retire. This will leave a military sharply divided, increasingly reluctant to make the necessary personal sacrifices in the name of the republic and the Kemalist model of nationhood, and more susceptible to the effects of internal social and ideological cleavages.

As part of its present policy of economic deregulation and devolution of capital onto the less-endowed parts of the country, the government has endeavored to restore equilibrium in the military by making the officer corps more accessible to competent cadres from the central, southern, and western regions. Whether this works depends to a large extent on the government's ability to clarify the military's role in a changing society, to incorporate its interests by making it structurally relevant to the formulation and execution of policy, and to satisfy its demands for remuneration and mobility commensurate with its new and primary role as ultimate arbiter of domestic stability.

As a promoter of solidarity among its various constituents, the Tunisian state, acting in the name of Bourguibism and the monoparty system, has formed an ideology which, by transcending all particularist demands, represents none and, although assuring the mediation of conflicts, denies autonomy to competing political parties. This has resulted in the stillbirth of a political community with its own values and norms outside the purview of the state.[91] As long as the state possesses a legitimacy that issues from an ability to meet the political needs of the Tunisian people, the military can guarantee the sanctity of the political order and morality. Tunisia has always been able to provide in all domains of national life in overarching ideology of modernism and secularism on the basis of which the state has monopolized the economic, political, and social spheres of each citizen's existence.

Acting as an institutional beneficiary of state action, and with no institutional norms different from those of the state, the military has existed as just another state "client." The patron-client relationship formerly took its strength from the congruence between the ideals of Tunisian guided democracy and its practice, thus enjoying a certain moral justification. Today, the relationship depends more on the dictates of practical necessity.

The notion of the "clientelization" of society by the state has been predicated on sound management of the material aspects of social life—that is, one the production of basic necessities through a rational plan for national development—and the citizenry, of which the military forms a stratum, has been content to give the state its allegiance. With the strain on present resources and the spreading thin of tangible benefits, that allegiance has become more passive. In the absence of a continuing symbolic support for the maintenance of a state-society equilibrium, such allegiance continues only to the degree that the state is capable of providing a never-ending source of material rewards. Thus the state is "condemned" to efficiency while being constrained by its function as regulator of capital accumulation.[92] The effects of state clientelization can therefore be measured in terms of a proportional decrease in its legitimacy since the state cannot guarantee control over the internal and external economic conditions to which it is so vulnerable. And with the increase in demands from its various constituencies and interest groups, the state is pushed closer and closer to the limits of its extractive capacities. As the state struggles to satisfy, delay, or redistribute benefits, it finds that greater demands are being made in consequence.

The clientelization of society by the state is in imminent danger of breaking down because the gap between available resources and demands for rewards and services is no longer bridgeable. The impact of such a dilemma is especially perilous for a system of national values. It turns positive allegiance to negative skepticism; and a law-abiding citizenry turns toward various forms of political radicalism and protest when economic frustrations transform themselves into a concept of indignation that attacks the moral justification of the state itself.[93] The military is no less susceptible to such pressure than other strata of the society.

The military has long considered itself an "orphan" of the state.[94] Its positive allegiance to the state has depended largely on its patriotism and nationalistic fervor, and on the congruence of its values with those of Bourguibism. Since 1978, these positive factors have been slowly eroding. The military no longer feels certain that the state is legitimately defensible. Called upon to protect the nation against militant Qadhdhafism, the military has realized that Bourguiba's political preference for a weak army has diminished its self-esteem in the face of external danger and has undermined its argument for a modernization of its force structures. Moreover, it has been called upon twice under conditions of generalized chaos to assume a police function that clearly belonged to the civilian security apparatus; and it is the civilian bureaucracy whom the soldiers hold responsible for dereliction of duty.

A certain distrust between the armed forces and the government has made its appearance in the context of an uneasy feeling that the civilian order no longer has direction and cannot cope with the problems of social unrest. The prospect of social anarchy and its infiltration of the military institution in Islamist and/or Qadhdhafist forms perplexes the military authorities. This prospect of anarchy, which the military perceives to be directly related to the rise of movements inimical to the

hegemony of the state, has sapped the military's vigor, blurred its vision of events, caused confusion in the understanding of its national role, and exacerbated the generational division within the officer corps. For this reason, the military harbors resentment against the political elites for using it as an instrument of political repression.

But most of all, the military does not believe it is receiving benefits commensurate with the burden the government is asking it to shoulder. The ultimate test of its continuing acquiescence to state hegemony rests on the state's capacity to work out the equation in which military power complements military responsibility. On the institutional level, this requires a program of physical modernization; on the individual level, it implies a relaxation of the immobility that has frozen younger officers in the junior grades. Thus mobility and modernization, two of the most important factors in which the limits of the clientelization of the society at large are circumscribed, ramify also along the soldiery, putting the government under even greater pressure to effect an equitable societal balance between competing social forces.

The route to promotion in the officer corps is long and arduous. Promotion from second to first lieutenant averages seven years, to captain an additional four to five years. Stagnation in grade has come about because of an extremely reduced personnel budget. Of the approximately 800 officers in all the services trained between 1956 and the October War of 1967, at least half remain on active duty. Until recently, Tunisian youth has shown little interest in a military career because there has always existed sufficient field grade officers to fill positions in the top ranks. This has led to a relative shortage of junior officers.

With the intensification of threats against the regime from the middle 1970s to the present, the government decided to invest in modernization and expansion of the military. An attempt was made to put a military career in good light in order to attract the best graduates of technical and scientific education, and the government has opened the doors of the armed forces to new officer candidates. Those graduates who entered the military in the last six years can be called the Expansion Class. They have developed a keen awareness of group solidarity, an apartness from society, and a sense of deprivation in respect to civilian elites. If the technocrats feel that deprivation is a lack of upward mobility within the armed forces, the Expansion Class sees deprivation in the more political context of military spending indexed against the lack of jobs and national economic disabilities. Such a politicization of the military provokes resentment in two ways: it strains the loyalty of the youngest officers whenever the armed forces are called into action against civil dissenters, and it creates antagonism against the senior ranks who have engaged in featherbedding practices due to the essential garrison nature of the Tunisian military. The senior field grade officers, although legally barred from moonlighting, have not been discouraged from outside investment in land and in local business. For them, retirement represents not so much the loss of income as it does the unraveling of political connections they assiduously cultivated during their

long tenure in place. And it is to the prospect of modernization that the senior ranks look as a rationale for their continued influence.

The government is aware of the potential causes for dissatisfaction in the officer corps and has demonstrated a concern for the institutional stability of the armed forces by attempting to provide more professional mobility through expansion and modernization. Less concern has been demonstrated for the noncommissioned officers and the common soldiers, however. Until the time of the general strike of 1978, universal conscription was not rigorously enforced. The military had grown little even though the armed forces were the recipients of increasingly larger budgets for materiel in the 1970s. At the same time, a larger pool of manpower became available as a result of a steadily increasing birthrate. In point of fact, it was more profitable to avoid drafting the gainfully employed into the armed forces. The 1975 National Service Law allowed job holders to discharge their obligations while retaining their civilian employment by paying the difference between their salary and inferred military pay directly to the treasury.

This arrangement suited the UGTT as a means of maintaining security of employment for those already in place, and the government approved the compromise for the obvious savings it produced for the economy in general. Moreover, the National Service Law gave the government greater control over the UGTT inasmuch as the inducteee doing his alternative service in this manner came under military jurisdiction for civil infractions and was required to drop his membership in the national trade union movement as well as in any other political party or organization.

After the general strike, when a new Civil Service Corps was created to conscript unemployed youth who were politically unreliable, the conscription law finally showed its teeth. The government justified this action as a solution to the general problem of joblessness. The UGTT contested the government on this issue, arguing that the Civil Service Corps brought youth into the armed forces to work as laborers on public projects. This, said UGTT, did not attack the question of structural unemployment since the corps put the recruit to work without giving him any training that could be transferred to the civilian sector.[95] In the final analysis, conscription threatened to flood the armed forces with elements whose loyalty under conditions of conflict would be extremely doubtful and served only as temporary palliative for an already unstable political environment. Such elements, it could be argued, might make common cause against military authority with noncommissioned officers who have been smothered in the cabin of command and with the most recent class of politically sensitive subalterns.

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CHAPTER 2

THE COURSE OF MILITARY MODERNIZATION

The Tunisian armed forces embarked on a course of growth and modernization in the middle seventies, when threats of domestic unrest and outside intervention materialized in the context of labor agitation and an aggressive Libyan posture toward maritime boundaries. Between 1976 and 1977, the military budget more than doubled—from 9 million to 20 million dinars. It has grown steadily each year since, reflecting the increasing costs for modernization. The 1982 military budget was 35 percent higher than that of 1981. By 1983, the military operating budget had grown to 81.6 million dinars, a 16.6-percent increase over 1982. At the same time, the equipment budget for defense was 76.8 million dinars, 2 percent over 1982. The share of the national budget for defense was 10 percent in 1983, about the same as for the two previous years, but it has increased from a 7.8-percent level in 1980. Defense expenditures in 1983 represented slightly less than 3 percent of the gross national product.

On the basis of increased expenditure, the Tunisian general staff envisaged an expanded army of 30,000 men organized into five brigades by the middle 1980s. They also foresaw a new mobile combined arms regiment, created from the nucleus of the old Saharan regiment, stationed at the southern maritime oasis of Gabés, the Tunisian city nearest the Libyan frontier. For its new mission of protecting the southern frontier, the army required from the United States a substantial number of M107 mortar carriers, M60A3 battle tanks, M109 self-propelled artillery, and M113A2 armored personnel carriers with TOW missiles.

The other service with ambitious plans for growth is the air force, which sees external defense against the Libyan threat as a combined ground and air operation. One of the major purchases considered essential for the modernization of its force structure and new mission is the acquisition of two squadrons of F-5E aircraft, several C-130 transport planes, and an integrated air defense system which includes sophisticated surface-to-air missile batteries.

The modernization of the Tunisian military has created an economic predicament. In 1982, oil revenues fell, phosphate exportation was declining,

earnings from tourism were off considerably, agricultural prices were extremely weak because of inclement weather conditions, and the rate of economic growth was 1 percent (the Sixth Plan objective was 6 percent). For 1983, the rate of growth increased to 3 percent. During this period, foreign currency reserves availability had dropped from two months to less than thirteen days. The debt service ratio rose from 13.7 percent to 17 percent in 1983, and it was estimated that a full implementation of programs for military modernization might push the debt service ratio to more than 20 percent by 1986.*

In the summer of 1983, there was an arms transfer payment shortfall; and the Tunisian government stated that it could not budget to cover the gap in what was owed under the US Foreign Military Sales program without endangering social and economic development. This was a motivating factor for the Tunisian government's request to reduce the number of its military purchases. Moreover, Saudi assistance for military purchases did not materialize. Nor did aid from France. It was argued in some circles that with a more flexible grace period for repayment of debts on guaranteed credits and a higher percentage of aid in grants, the programs could be stretched out so that the government might pay its American debts without major impact on the economy. The government decided to reduce its purchases by half, which would have meant a cost of 80 percent of the revised program in military transfers (valued at $286.7 million) in order to receive 50 percent of content; but Bourguiba countermanded his government and ordered it to find the necessary means to continue the programs at full strength. Tunisia owed $160 million, which was adjusted to $102.8 million after negotiations with American authorities; and the $102.8 million was supplied by a supplemental appropriation from the US Congress.

The Tunisian military modernization program was for the moment saved; and the government was spared from taking austerity measures to pay for its shortfall, which would have vindicated its critics and shaken Tunisia's economic credibility with other donor nations. On the other hand, these events established a pattern of dangerous precedents. Because of the perceived external threat emanating from Libya, the Tunisian government could not countenance a reduction in US support for the purpose of building a new national military machine. Furthermore, continued US support represented sustained confidence in Tunisian stability; and Tunisia could not afford the psychological damage that a default might cause with other creditors.

Yet it appears that the Tunisian government has neither the economic flexibility nor the hard currency reserve to maintain both internal domestic growth and military modernization. Since shortfalls in payments for arms transfers are expected to continue, and little aid seems to be forthcoming from other sources, a dangerous dependency on the United States is unavoidable. Requests for US military aid can be expected to rise steadily in the 1980s.

*The most recent figures for 1985 show that this level has already been surpassed.

Illustrative of this dilemma is the comment of the Tunisian Ministry of Defense on its Fiscal Year 1985 assistance request to the United States. Despite the $15 million in MAP funds, concessionary rates for $25 million in FMS, and $3 million in economic support funds, the ministry expressed concern that these levels may be reduced. For the two C-130 transports, 20 percent of the $60 million purchase would be paid in Fiscal Year 1985. Also, $20 million was due in Fiscal Year 1985 for the first squadron of F-5E fighters. And so the ministry estimated that the programs for the air force, if taken in consideration with those of the other services, would require a minimum of $100 million in funds. In addition, Tunisia would need longer term funding at concessionary rates for the financing of its second F-5E squadron. This constant upping of the ante cannot help but lead to a disastrous increase in the debt service ratio by the end of the present decade.

The United States has tried to keep its level of aid at a constant yearly figure. The problem for the United States is to place a monetary figure on its national interests with respect to Tunisia; and it fears that without sufficient help, internal antiwestern forces will be encouraged within Tunisia and elsewhere in the Maghreb. The United States hopes to ensure Tunisian moderation not only in the region but in the larger context of Middle East conflicts, especially with respect to the Palestinians and the PLO, which is now formally based in Tunis; but it must do this without giving the appearance that Tunisia has become a United States proxy.

There exists unfortunately an embarrassing discrepancy in Tuniso-American relations, involving both the definition of threat and the price required to deter it. The modernization predicament will have an inevitable impact on the solidarity of the armed forces themselves. The military will remain ambivalent in its acquiescence to civil authority because a number of officers—particularly those in junior grades—consider modernization essential to their personal mobility and career prospects while at the same time realizing that it may lead to an undesirable political relationship with the United States.

In sum, the military is under strain from within and from without; and it is manifest in several ways. First, the military is loath to become an instrument of political regression lest it be divided internally. Second, the military is losing its faith in the inculcated value of Bourguiba's Kemalist model of the state. Third, the military fears the government's ambivalence toward the forces of Islamism and Qadhdhafism. And fourth, the military feels that it does not have the institutional perks commensurate with the dangers of its new institutional role. These factors contribute to a new emphasis on career among the younger officers, the principal manifestation of which may be the avoidance of duty that is not personally rewarding. So, as the military increases its involvement in national affairs, it will probably be less likely to answer the challenge with a single voice.

Whether the military will intervene in affairs of state depends on a number of factors: Will the economic crisis of the 1970s, brought about by the dependence of Tunisian capital on outside markets, abate? Will the national consensus on "sacred" values, created in the 1960s and propagated by universal education based

on the positivistic myth of unilinear progress, survive economic dislocation? Will the disaffected urban and rural classes, mobilized by this myth, remain largely on the margin of society and continue to militate for the delegitimization of the state? Will Islamism grow at the expense of other political tendencies, denying to the PSD the hegemony necessary to assure an alliance of all social classes?

It goes without saying that a significant redistribution of power is unthinkable until Bourguiba dies and the prime minister accedes to his office. A new president will be confirmed by referendum concurrently with the election of candidates to the National Assembly. His election must necessarily, then, inaugurate a period of coalition building between the elites and the recently enfranchised opposition parties. The new head of government will not be guaranteed Bourguiba's personal control over the party and the state apparatus.

The pluralism envisaged by the present prime minister, Muhammad Mzali, may turn out to be limited to the MUP-II, the Communists, and the MSD which in truth represent little more than a shrinking core of dissident Destourians available for co-optation. Such openness is politically deceptive; it heralds the beginning of a process in which the Islamist movement and the UGTT are not likely to participate, although the trade union leadership may consider reconstituting the UGTT as a labor party to defuse the challenge of the UNTT.[96] The Islamist movement may decline to participate because the government has little sympathy with the principles of Islamic sociopolitical organization and may, in fact, have already passed from the stage of reformism to open militancy. The UGTT may not join in a coalition because of the philosophical schism in its executive ranks; and with such a rapidly shrinking representational base, Destourianism cannot help but undergo an irreparable dilution of its political vitality. Such an occurrence would free the elites from the immobilism of the Bourguibist environment and for an internecine political war. If all pretense to coalitional collegiality evaporates, and the government falls hostage to the ambitions of its officeholders, the military can be expected to intervene on a regular basis in political affairs.

The greater the persistence of social disintegration, the less apt the military will be to retire to its barracks. A process of internal "colonization" by the military may be set in motion. Senior officers may be elevated to intermediary civilian posts such as the *secrétariats d'état* attached to key ministries, and may exercise a careful surveillance over crucial administrative functions much in the same way as the French system of *contrôle civil* during the Protectorate period. In this way, the civilian elites can be neutralized or excluded from the exercise of effective authority. It stands to reason that the military would also seek to consolidate its influence over the Political Bureau of the PSD, where senior officers may insist on representation, and the intermediary levels, where trusted field grade officers may monopolize adjunctive positions to the provincial governors. This would put the military effectively in a position to move from hegemony to actual proprietorship over the state.[97] Under these circumstances, more and more control over divisive elite competition is required; and political elements of both left and right—

Communists, Baathists, and Islamists of any stripe, not already co-opted in the immediate post-Bourguiba period into a coalitional arrangement with the government and party—risk suppression in the name of social harmony.

The armed forces may begin to arrogate to themselves a greater proportion of the nation's resources to defend the people against "internal" and "external" enemies; but the distinction between internal and external defense is bound to be blurred in the struggle to maintain an equilibrium among the competing elites, and the problems will remain. And the military can bring no new ideological initiatives to these problems. No new programs for the distribution of wealth will emerge; no political demarches reflecting a consistent, formal, internal political direction will be made toward the region, the Arabs or the West. Manifest as a reluctance to abandon its outwardly apolitical, nationalist, and nonmodernizing institutional character, the historical legacy of the Tunisian military may lead to pessimism regarding its capacity to run a modern state. Such a military would concentrate on the reestablishment of a status quo ante rather than on solutions for the problems in the name of which it imposed its hegemony; and this would result in the imposition of a superficial order behind which the structural ills of the country would remain hidden, recognized by some but unresponsive to manipulation. Inasmuch as it lacks elite experience, the Tunisian military is unlikely to adopt a formal ideological or political structure to complement its new power. Yet pressure may build among the younger, more politicized officers for such structures. If so, the cohesion of the officer corps will be threatened.

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CHAPTER 3

TOWARD A RESTRUCTURING OF THE SOCIETY

There can be little doubt that a generational conflict implicit in the Tunisian officer corps will play itself out in the post-Bourguiba period. The younger officers of the Expansion Class, of whom an increasing number have their roots and sympathies in the dispossessed strata of the society, will make a tremendous impact on the sociopolitical cohesion of the military. This cannot help but promote a challenge to the senior military leadership. The gravity of this challenge depends on the degree to which the present senior leadership succeeds in reformulating the lines of civil and military authority after the death of the president. Within the context of an overarching military hegemony over the state, the former political elites will probably retain a diminished but still significant amount of influence—an inexperienced military would find it difficult to govern without civilian expertise. By logical extension, this opens new channels through which the former elites can articulate their interests. And so it would not be surprising if the military were ultimately obliged to seek alliances with members of the old regime and with the urban commercial and agricultural bourgeoisie who, like the military, would demand stability at any price. Such compromises may lead, on one hand, to an increasing trend toward exaggerated consumerism among a privileged minority of which the senior military leadership would constitute an important element and, on the other hand, a further marginalization of the dispossessed and their social deviationism. Most important, such alliances could lead to the final loss of the military's Kemalist ideal, which formerly guaranteed its institutional cohesiveness.

The repeated intervention of the military, which attempts to affect the social reconciliation characteristic of the Bourguibist world view, may degenerate into a cult of pragmatic and chauvinistic nationalism. If social peace is not restored, it is probable that the aspirations for mobility and substantive political change among younger officers will not be satisfied. This poses a problem for the senior leadership. The difference between the officer class in authority and the younger generation of officers will become more pronounced. The latter have a world view that is more sensitive than that of their elders to global and regional issues as well as to the place Tunisia occupies in the constellation of Maghrebian forces and in the

arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is a world view that places absolute value on technical competence, which is lacking at higher levels of the armed forces. A constant agitation of young officers, born of ideological frustration, intolerance of failure, suspicion of motives and goals, and regional and social distinctions, marks the widening gulf between generations.

The wheel of politics comes full round: officers would depose officers for reasons of institutional purity and an end to corruption, the very reasons that senior leaders gave for initially deposing the former Bourguibist civilian elites, they hoped to avoid the fierce competition that accompanies the ascendancy of one man and one political point of view. A legacy in its most paradoxical form of the liberal authoritarian democracy utilized by Bourguiba to secure his continued predominance well beyond his own capacity to govern.

It is extremely difficult to predict the ultimate consequences of this intramilitary feuding. In resisting the tendency toward the rise of a military dictator, the junior ranks may in fact encourage the appearance among themselves of a personality who makes common cause with the rank and the file of the armed forces and the noncommissioned officers. On the other hand, the changing of the guard implied in the present effort to democratize the armed forces may set in motion the formulation of an official ideology that reaches back into the precolonial past to favor the recrudescence of peasant traditions. Such an ideology would take the form of a "renaissance" of values, promoted by the officers of peasant origin and supported by a union of farmers, the urban lumpenproletariat of uprooted country folk, and the displaced petty bourgeoisie. It would give the hope, and perhaps the illusion, of participation in national life to all the dispossessed classes.[98]

The coming to power of the military in post-Bourguiba Tunisia is by no means inevitable; it is simply a worst-case scenario for society and state in full transition. Tunisia's ultimate direction cannot be entirely known. The Destourian Socialist Party may regain its former status through conscientious reform of its structures; the Tunisian economy may be restored to health, thus permitting the moratorium necessary for a reworking of intra-elite relationships on more realistic grounds; Libya and Algeria may intervene, changing the internal situation.

After the bread riots of January 1984, Bourguiba demanded that the PSD be reorganized and reinvigorated. The test of the party, however, does not depend solely on its capacity for structural reform; it also depends on the translation of reform into renewed consensus. Therefore, the anticipated political pluralism must anchor itself in the reality of free and open electoral competition. The party must make some hard decisions concerning political liberalization and the sharing of responsibility with opponents who may demand unpopular accommodations as the price for their participation. The party's natural partner in consensus building is the UGTT, but the trade union movement must first heal its own schism. If the political base is to be widened and the prime minister's position consolidated, the cronyism that gives the present ruling system its particular cachet of political expediency must come to an end.

Recourse to coalitional balance implies a redefinition of the dynamics of Tunisian *authenticité*. This is essential if the peasantry and the urban dissidents are to be integrated into the party; yet such a redefinition in terms of an outmoded life-style, superannauted traditions, and a mummified past must be avoided at all costs.[99] It seems certain, then, that the ruling establishment must strike a balance between the Arabo-Islamic heritage of the nation and a modernization stripped of its most offensive Westernizing connotations. Success may endow Tunisia with a new sociopolitical and cultural direction without forcing it into the militant Islamic camp.

If additional resources are found in Tunisia, such as valuable minerals or new reserves of petroleum, the life of the regime might be prolonged by artificial means and provide the respite necessary for the work of social reconstruction. Discoveries of this kind are, of course, hypothetical. And extraction of resources is a long, drawn-out, costly business that ultimately depends for its profitability on market conditions and economies of scale.[100] Moreover, the insertion of such industries into an already well-diversified economy produces special problems. When such industries are introduced in societies that tend toward economic monoculture, those societies require the recalibration of both public and private sectors. They suffer from diversion of government funds from agricultural production, and they experience sharply rising wage differentials between workers and peasants as well as an acceleration in the growth of the urban lumpenproletariat. But the Tunisians have demonstrated a capacity for rational management, which could serve to minimize the adverse effects of rapid changes.

Should the government drive the Islamists underground or fail to co-opt them, all hope will fade for their revolution into a force for civil order. Repression would not only confirm the conspiratorial outlook that characterizes the militant Islamist, but would further erode elite legitimacy.[101] If the party does not regain its ground, and if the economy continues to falter and stagnate, the potential for a Khomeinist solution will increase. The degree to which the armed forces remain susceptible to Islamist subversion is a matter of conjecture. For the present, they possess an ideal of citizenship that softens the effects of internal divisions.

Perhaps the greatest short term constraint on an independent role for the Tunisian military is the possibility of a Libyan and/or an Algerian intervention. Both Libya and Algeria have considered the disposition of Tunisia a matter of basic security. Embittered by recent friction over the Western Saharan question, each regards Tunisia as its irredenta, a little Lebanon for which each claims to be the historical hinterland. Protracted anarchy within Tunisia, which calls into question its role of buffer between larger and more powerful neighbors, acts to destabilize their tenuous relationships. Aware of its precarious situation, Tunisia has prudently adopted a policy of careful rapprochement with both countries. Tunisia signed a pact of friendship and cooperation with Algeria in the spring of 1983 (later joined by Mauritania). This pact diminishes the threat of an Algerian invasion, but there remains the potent menace of Qadhdhafism.

Colonel Qadhdhafi's personal attitude toward Tunisia had alternated between interventionary and politically practical. In January 1980, with Algeria furnishing the territorial base of operations, he sponsored an uprising in the southern mining town of Gafsa. He has violated the Tunisian frontier on numerous occasions since that time, most recently in May 1984 after an abortive attempt on his life. And he has been the alleged perpetrator of kidnappings and other outrages. At the same time, Qadhdhafi has paid court directly to Bourguiba and other important political personages in Tunisia. To smooth the way for these personal demarches, he has agreed to annul the Tuniso-Libyan Unity Proclamation of 1974 and to settle amiably the outstanding question of the Tuniso-Libyan maritime frontier on which the future of the Tunisian petroleum industry may rest.

Without an entente with Algiers—and after the signing of the Libyan-Moroccan pact of unity in August 1984, this seems even more remote—Qadhdhafi cannot realistically entertain the idea of conquering Tunisia. Were Qadhdhafi to commit his army against Tunisia—an unlikely but unpredictable venture—he would have first to master the growing unrest of home and make certain that his position with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was unassailable. And the chances for this do not seem very good. His previous aggression in Chad, his unpopular stance on the Saharan issue, and his pursuit of a Saharan Islamic Republic uniting the Muslim north of Africa to the Muslim parts of the sub-Saharan south have already earned him the disapproval of a majority of African states. An invasion of Tunisia would most certainly lead to a political isolation, and Qadhdhafi can little afford political isolation at the moment.

Were Qadhdhafi to risk such an adventure, however, the Tunisian armed forces would be obliged to rely on the colonel's military ineptitude. Despite the Libyan army's small size and dismal record in previous conventional conflicts with better-trained armies such as that of Egypt, it possesses overwhelming numerical superiority, fire power, and control of the air when compared with the Tunisian army.[102] The best the Tunisians could hope for would be to fight a delaying defensive engagement in the southern mountain passes and along the coastal road to Gabès until outside help materialized.

From any point of view, the Tunisian armed forces are woefully inadequate to repulse a full-scale invasion. The Tunisian order of battle is too thin in fighters, tanks, and transport aircraft. And even under the best of circumstances, Tunisia possesses insufficient resources to finance a military modernization program equal to the Libyan challenge. Already caught short on the first installment for 12 F-5E fighter aircraft, the Tunisian government has had to seek supplemental appropriations on concessionary terms from the United States. Even if the Tunisian government manages to pay for the initial 12 fighters, financing more high-technology weapons will be ruinous for the economy. It will also have an adverse impact on consensus building after the death of Bourguiba.

It is furthermore debatable whether Libya will risk a military confrontation as long as the Tunisian-Algerian-Mauritanian treaty of friendship remains in effect.

The recent treaty of unity between Morocco and Libya did much to assure Moroccan military ascendancy in the struggle with the Polisario over the Western Sahara; and for the withdrawal of Libyan support from the Polisario, Colonel Qadhdhafi gained the Moroccan king's aid in his effort to isolate Algeria as a contending source of regional power. Thus, a strike against Tunisia might force the Algerians to come to Tunisia's aid. Although the Tunisians would certainly not welcome an Algerian protectorate over the Tunisian state, neither would Colonel Qadhdhafi wish an Algerian army encamped on the Tuniso-Libyan frontier and on the road to Tripoli.

Of the outside powers, the logic of intervention sides with the French; but the French have complementary trade relations with all the Maghreb nations, especially with Libya and Algeria, which tends to rule out the possibility of French intervention in local disputes. Furthermore, the French have already lost much credibility over the Chad issue when Qadhdhafi successfully duped President Mitterand into believing that Libyan troops had been withdrawn from northern Chad in accordance with the Franco-Libyan understanding of 16 September 1984. The French guarantee for the stability of Central Africa, on which Paris's claim to a sphere of influence in Francophone Africa rests, was thus put into question. This leaves the United States as the only outside power able to help the Tunisians militarily in time of need; and it is fair to ask whether the United States has evolved diplomatic and political positions capable of sustaining intervention.

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CHAPTER 4

UNITED STATES POLICY AND TUNISIA

The history of Tuniso-American relations extends back into the early years of the American Republic when, in 1797, a treaty with the Regency of Tunis brought to a peaceful conclusion the problem of freedom of navigation along the southern littoral of the Mediterranean Sea. As French colonial domination eclipsed other European interests in the region during the course of the nineteenth century, and as America turned her attention to continental expansion, relations between Washington and Tunis developed no significant direction. American soldiers appeared on North African shores in 1942 as part of the invasion force that was to drive the Axis powers from Africa, but interest in Tunisia and her neighbors did not revive until President Kennedy began to cultivate a distinct political and economic approach to the rapidly decolonizing third world.

Tunisia received a generous share of American development aid in return for its moderate policies with respect to American Middle East initiatives and the growing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union over the question of Israel and the Palestinians. Because Tunisia has remained stable since independence in 1957, and has used its aid in a rational manner, American largesse has been maintained at stable levels. By the 1980s, Tunisia was already approaching a rate of economic growth that would make it ineligible for further assistance.

An equilibrium in the bilateral Tuniso-American relationship developed over the years, and it was hoped that ties to the other traditional and progressive regimes of North Africa could be created. The relationship was founded on a generally accepted consensus of ideological views that accentuated the Tunisian preference for a negotiated settlement of North African and intraregional disputes on a quid pro quo basis. There was also a genuine Tunisian neutrality toward the Soviet-American global rivalry.

The advantages of this relationship were twofold. First and most important, the United States gained the support of a respected third world nation that could serve as both interlocutor with its sister countries of the Arab world on important issues of regional conflict and demonstrator of the advantages of close cooperation with a

superpower. Second, a stable and friendly Tunisia would facilitate access between the eastern and western Mediterranean if US naval forces were required in the Persian Gulf region.

During his long career, Bourguiba has maintained steadfastly the need for an economic, cultural, and social scheme to integrate the populations of the four major Arab nations of the southern Mediterranean littoral. The Tunisian leader often speaks of a Greater Maghreb. In Bourguiba's thinking, a Greater Maghreb would arise as the consequence of a long series of interlocking agreements among Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya. These agreements would facilitate the free movement of goods and capital across frontiers, and they would enhance the possibilities of intraregional cooperation through the creation of permanent consultative organisms. Not unlike the European Economic Community idea, the Greater Maghreb idea gains its force from the belief that mutual self-interest is the only antidote to divisive, narrow nationalism that plagues the Arab East and impedes its development. The legitimacy of the Greater Maghreb idea lies in the perception of a former historical unity of the Maghrebian peoples, their common adherence to Islam, the ethnic, linguistic, and racial affinities that have marked their social relationships, and a shared colonial past.

Under optimal conditions of regional integration, a Greater Maghreb would permit the United States to deal with problems affecting American-North African relations as bilateral issues, thus simplifying the question of American security interests. Unfortunately, however, the affinities among the Maghreb societies do not have equivalent political dimensions. The imbalance of political and economic power corresponds to the structural extremes that mark the various political systems of the Maghreb countries and the sharp contrasts in their respective demographic and economic weights.

Today the Maghreb states compete with each other. Morocco has extended its domain into the Western Sahara and has revived its ancient imperial idea. Algeria is a socialist democracy that has strong inclinations to speak for both the Arab world and the third world. Libya has chosen the intermediary path. It proclaims to be a Jamahiriyya, or pure people's democracy, which mixes Islamic religious radicalism with anti-Westernism under the aegis of one-state Libyan nationalism. Since 1975, Libya has contested Morocco's pretension to territorial expansion by supporting both Saharawi nationalism and the creation of a Saharan Arab Democratic Republic in the former Spanish Sahara. Libya had formed a tactical alliance with Algeria to this end, but that alliance broke down in 1983 when Algeria signed a pact of friendship with Tunisia and Mauritania after the latter's final defection as Morocco's chief ally against the Polisario. The direction of Libyan regional policy has been to promote the political unity of all the Maghreb nations as an instrument of Arabo-Islamic and African pressure against Israel and the West. Tunisia is the only Maghrebian state with no regional hegemonical pretensions, but it has been obliged to enter into this unstable alliance system in order to protect itself from its more covetous neighbors—especially Libya, which on several occasions has

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attempted to align Tunisia with its cause by encouraging internal forces of dissent within the country.

These are the realities that the United States must consider in creating a viable Tunisian policy. As the only nation of the Maghreb without hegemonical aspirations, Tunisia is the natural leader in the drive for regional integration. The notion of a Greater Maghreb has always been an integral part of the Bourguibist world view, which is dedicated to the evolution of a moderate environment that favors an equality of obligation among the regional states. While it is true that Tunisia does not possess enough economic or political weight in regional councils to be accepted as the leader of such an enterprise, US backing of any other Maghreb nation in that capacity would necessarily signify imperialism in the eyes of the moderates. Tunisia must be supported because only Tunisia can serve as a neutral interlocutor. The Arab League and the Palestine Liberation Organization have found a home in Tunis but have had no fundamental influence on the political direction of the state—a fact that speaks eloquently for the stability of the Tunisian view of the world.

To assure continuity of this Bourguibist world view and encourage the post-Bourguiba leadership to enlarge the scope for pluralism within the country, the United States should support an orderly transition to power of Bourguiba's chosen successor. The United States should also maintain an open attitude to the funding of the Tunisian development effort by encouraging our allies to invest in selective Tunisian enterprises as our own aid diminishes, especially in those areas that favor integration of those demographic strata that have been neglected through the short-sightedness of previous Tunisian state policies. The United States should also dissuade the post-Bourguiba leadership from insisting that an excessive military modernization program is the only antidote to a threatened national security. Rather, the United States should attempt to convince those leaders that the Tunisian military should be trained to control demonstrations of civic dissent, to maintain the security of Tunisian borders, and to share partnership in the domestic development effort. This appears to be the best way to guarantee an orderly transition to the next phase of national evolution, and it can be accomplished through training and weaponry associated with crowd control.

The national security forces, then, are the logical object of American military assistance. And the United States should impress upon the government of Tunisia the need for a future deployment of regular military forces into the countryside. Its command and control structure should be decentralized to ensure a prompt reaction time. The national guard should be augmented in areas of possible invasion, forming the core of a citizen army to act as the first line of defense until regular forces can meet the challenge. The Tunisian government must ultimately rethink its defense requirements, and must take the steps necessary to assure its national survival.

NOTES

1. Charles Micaud, "Leadership and Development: The Case of Tunisia," *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 4 (June 1969): 471.

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3. For the expanded typology, *see* Mira Zussman, "Pendulum Swings in Land Laws and Rural Development in Tunisia: What Do You Do When the Law Keeps Changing?" (University of California, Berkeley: Center for Middle Eastern Studies Spring Conference, 28-29 May 1983), unpublished paper, 1.

4. Clement Henry (Moore), "Tunis After Bourguiba: Liberalization or Political Degeneration?" in I. William Zartman, ed., *Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 268.

5. Douglas Ashford, "Succession and Social Change in Tunisia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 1973); 23.

6. For the full text, *see* Harold Nelson, ed., *Tunisia: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1979), 173.

7. Lars Rudebeck, *Party and People* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 90.

8. Ashford, "Succession and Social Change," 25.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 91.

11. Ibid., 92.

12. Sadok Chaâbane, "Le système constitutionnel tunisien à travers la Réforme de 1976," in Jean Leca, *Développements Politiques au Maghreb*, 312.

13. Ashford, "Succession and Social Change," 30.

14. Ibid., 35.

15. Henry (Moore), "Tunis after Bourguiba," 278.

16. Ibid., 279.

17. For details, *see* Lorna Hahn, "Tunisian Political Reform: Procrastination and Progress," *Middle East Journal* 26, no. 4 (1972): 406-13.

18. Chaâbane "Le système constitutionnel," 314.

19. Ibid., 315-6.

20. Ibid., 321-3.

21. Ibid., 335-8; Nelson, *Tunisia*, 176.

22. Camau, "Caractère et rôle du constitutionalisme," 382.

23. Ibid., 381.

24. Ibid., 405.

25. For implications of this statement, *see* John Entelis, "Ideological Change and an Emerging Counter Culture in Tunisian Politics," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 12, no. 4 (1974): 543-68. *See also* Mark Tessler, "The Tunisians," in M. A. Tessler, W. M. O'Barr, and D. H. Spain, eds.,

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26. For a survey of the history of the Tunisian labor movement, *see* Eqbal Ahmad, "Politics and Labor in Tunisia" (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University, 1967), unpublished PhD dissertation, chapter 1.

27. Elbaki Hermessi, *Leadership and National Development in North Africa* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1972), 117.

28. Eqbal Ahmad, "Trade Unionism," in L. Carl Brown, ed., *State and Society in Independent North Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1966), 153.

29. Ahmad, "Politics and Labor," 21.

30. For the conditions of corporate growth, *see* Ahmad, "Trade Unionism," 156.

31. Henry (Moore), "Tunisia After Bourguiba," 274.

32. Ibid., 276. *See also* Ahmad, "Trade Unionism," 150.

33. Ahmad, "Trade Unionism," 185.

34. For a discussion of these census figures, *see* Nelson, *Tunisia*, 66.

35. Ibid., 121.

36. Ibid.

37. Nigel Disney, "The Working Class Revolt in Tunisia," *MERIP Reports* (no. 67), 8, no. 4 (May 1978): 12.

38. Ibid., 14.

39. Hermessi, *Leadership*, 185.

40. Ibid., 190.

41. Ibid., 191.

42. Ibid., 191-2.

43. Ibid., 194.

44. Riall Nolan, "Tunisia's Time of Transition," *Current History*, no. 470 (December 1981): 407.

45. *The Middle East Economic Digest*, 10 September 1982, 12.

46. For the 1980 figures, *see* Nolan, "Tunisia's Time of Transition," 408.

47. Ibid.

48. *Africa Confidential*, November 1982, 11.

49. For a forecast of the plan requirements, *see* Middle East Economic Digest, 10 September 1982, 12.

50. For a discussion of this point, *see* Nicholas Hopkins, "Tunisia: An Open and Shut Case," *Social Problems* 28, no. 4, (April 1981): 387-90.

51. Chaâbane, "Le système constitutionnel," 19.

52. For discussion of this point, *see* Nelson, *Tunisia*, 204-5.

53. Ibid.

54. Norma Salem, "Anatomy of Legitimacy: The Role of Islam in Tunisia" (Montreal: McGill University Centre for Developing Area Studies), Discussion Paper Series no. 5 (April 1983), 3.

55. Ibid., 17.

56. Ibid., 22.

57. Bourguiba's speech in Kairouan, 24 March 1975, as cited in Michel Camau, *Pouvoirs et institutions au Maghreb* (Tunis: Productions Cérès, 1978), 270-72.

58. Abdelkader Zghal, "The Reactivation of Tradition in a Post-Traditional Society," *Daedalus*, Winter 1973, 233-36.

59. Bassam Tibi, "The Renewed Role of Islam in the Political and Social Development of the Middle East," The Middle East Journal 37, 1 (Winter 1983): 5.

60. Ibid.

61. Souhayr Belhassen, "l'Islam contestataire en Tunisie," 2ième partie, *Jeune Afrique*, no. 950 (March 1979): 66.

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63. Belhassen, "l'Islam contestataire," 3ième partie, no. 951, 90.

64. Ibid., 90-1.

65. Ibid., 91. For Jourchi's comment and the typology of the factions within the MTI, see *Africa Confidential*, 15 October 1984, 6.

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66. Belhassen, "l'Islam contestataire," 3ième partie, no. 951, 91-2.

67. Ibid., 29. *See also* Vatin, "Revival in the Maghreb," 241.

68. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* 5 (9 August 1983): Q8.

69. Malcolm Kerr, "Political and Economic Trends in North Africa," in Avram Udovitch, ed., *The Middle East: Oil, Conflict, and Hope* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976), 410-11.

70. Ibid., 410.

71. *New African* (September 1982): 30.

72. L. B. Ware, "Security in the Arab Maghreb," (Documentary Research Division, Air University Library, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., 1980), 73.

73. Robert D. Kaplan, "Turmoil in Tunisia," *New Republic*, 26 March 1984, 10-12.

74. *Jeune Afrique*, no. 1201 (January 1984): 31.

75. *Jeune Afrique*, no. 1214 (11 April 1984): 42-49.

76. In 1962, a number of officers were implicated in a plot to assassinate Bourguiba in the aftermath of the attempt by Bourguiba's trusted lieutenant, Salah Ben Youssef, to determine the political course of the state in the early years of independence. The military as an institution maintained its loyalty throughout this period of unrest and was purged of its dissident elements. *See* Rudebeck, *Party and People*, 61-2, footnote 3.

77. Zghal, *Le Progrès* (Tunis), 1 May 1984, 27.

78. Muhammad Mzali, *La Parole de l'Action* (Paris: Publisud, 1984), 142, 144. This interesting political testament written by the present prime minister as the Bourguiba era draws to a close echoes this Bourguibist sentiment and indicates that after Bourguiba his military policies will be continued.

79. Much in the same way that the Bey's tax expedition, the *mahallah*, linked the people to central authority in the pre-Protectorate period. *See* L. Carl Brown, *Ahmed Bey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), 127-33.

80. See *The Middle East Military Balance, 1983* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press), 240.

81. Nelson, *Tunisia*, 227, 234, 240, 244, 245.

82. Ibid., 236-38.

83. Ibid., 244. In 1978, for example, the armed forces had an active duty personnel of 22,200: 9,200 regulars and 13,000 conscripts.

84. Ibid., 293.

85. *The Middle East Military Balance, 1983*, 238.

86. Norman Friedman, "The Falklands War: Lessons Learned and Mislearned," *Orbis* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 916.

87. The military budget rose from 9 million dinars in 1976 to 20 million in 1977. See *Dialogue* (Tunis), no. 120 (27 December 1976): 36; Elie Cohen-Hadria, "La Tunisie veut modernizer son armament et le fait savoir," *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 75 (January-February 1977): 25-27; "Tunisie engagée dans la course aux armaments," *Jeune Afrique*, no. 828 (19 November 1976): 34-35.

88. Despite the growing Libyan threat, the official fiction of Tunisia's neutrality was rightly maintained: "The Tuniso-Libyan conflict explains to a great degree an option which aims at permitting the country to develop unaffected by hegemonies, threats, and pressures." Declaration of Abdallah Farhat, minister of defense, 10 December 1976 in *Le Temps* (Tunis), 12 December 1976, 2, as cited in the *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord, 1976* (Paris: Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques, 1977), 400-401.

89. Bourguiba's speech before the students of the Non-Commissioned Officers School at Fondouk al-Djedid, 15 March 1963, in "l'Armée au service de l'Etat" (Publication of the Tunisian Secretariat of State for Culture and Information), as cited in Camau, *Pouvoirs*, 268.

90. The Civil Service Law, now temporarily suspended, brought the chronically unemployed into the army in the late 1970s for the purpose of promoting public works. Although in theory an excellent way to develop the infrastructure of deprived areas, the Civil Service Law was, in practice, an unpopular punitive measure. It was used on occasion to clear the streets of dissidents and troublemakers. The National Service Law, on the other hand, furnished a means of alternate service to cadres with technical and industrial training to which the disaffected population had no access by allowing the military to induct professionals at a military rate of pay while at the same time leaving them at their jobs. This represented a net gain for industrial and commercial employers and for the economy in general but discouraged at the

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same time the permanent acquisition of technical expertise by the armed forces while flooding the ranks with undereducated malcontents.

91. Michel Camau, "Où va la Tunisie? l'Etat Tunisien de la tutelle au désengagement," *Maghreb-Machrek*, no, 103., 14.

92. Ibid., 15.

93. Ibid., 16.

94. Souhayr Belhassen, "Le Rêve de l'Uniforme," *Jeune Afrique*, no. 1043, (December 1980): 182.

95. A point made by Hermessi, *Leadership*, 166.

96. *See* Souhayr Belhassen, "Habib Achour, chef de parti," *Jeune Afrique*, no. 1240, 48.

97. A warning to this effect has already been sounded by the UGTT with respect to the appointment of Brig Gen Zayn al-Abdin Bin Ali to the directorship of national security with the Ministry of Interior in the aftermath of the recent bread riots. See *al-Sha'ab* (Tunis), 10 February 1984, 3. Bin Ali was subsequently advanced to the post of *Secrétaire d'Etat* in the same ministry.

98. See Zghal, *Le Progrès*, 27.

99. This is strongly emphasized by Mzali, *La Parole de l'Action*, 76.

100. Riall Nolan, "Tunisia's Time of Transition," 407; *Middle East Economic Digest*, 5 March 1982, 95; *Arab Gas and Oil*, 16 September 1982, 11-12.

101. For the psychosocial basis of Islamic revivalism, *see* chapter 3 of R. Hrair Dekmejian's study, *The Future of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Arab World in the 1980s* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Research and Development), October 1983.

102. A detailed breakout of the relative strength of the Tunisian and Libyan armed forces can be found in the *Middle East Military Balance, 1983*, 154-64, 238, 244. For a more extensive survey of Tunisian military potential, *see* Nelson, *Tunisia*, 227-64.

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